

M A R I A;

OR,

THE VICARAGE.

A NOVEL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MARIA

THE VICARAGE

A NOVEL

IN TWO VOLUMES



PREFACE.

QUID VETAT ET NOSMET?

Horace.

IN the present state of literature, there seems hardly an avenue which is unoccupied, or a path which has not been so frequently trodden before, that scarce a flower is left to be culled by the toiling hand of Industry.

All that remains for writers of this age, is, to present under different
a forms

forms the same subject-matter which has filled the world for a long course of years.

It may not inaptly be compared to a small portion of ground,—the solitary property of a man who wishes to diversify its appearance as much as possible :—one while he cuts it into parterres and borders, richly adorned with flowers ;—at another he turns it into a level plat of green ;—and again, into a shrubbery, or fish-pond—to give it the air of novelty in the highest degree. Still, however, it is the same piece of ground, viewed, indeed, in a variety of shapes,—but so determined its outlines, and so fixed its boundaries, that you can easily distinguish it to be the same.

The

PREFACE.

The author of the following sheets professes, therefore, neither to astonish by sublimity, nor to charm by perfect novelty.—It has been his aim to amuse, and to instruct; and should he be allowed in any wise to have succeeded, it will be no small gratification to him to have contributed, though but little, to the general stock of pleasure and improvement.

MARIA:

The author of the following treatise
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MARIA:
OR
THE VICARAGE.

CHAP. I.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE VICARAGE---CHARACTERS
OF THE VICAR---HIS DAUGHTER---HIS SON.**

"Delightful bow'rs of innocence and ease."

Goldsmith.

NEAT and simple in itself, the Vicarage of H..... was indebted to Nature for one of her most delightful spots. A shady wood defended it from the rude blasts of the North, and afforded a cool retreat in the warmth of summer: the mazy wanderings of a pure rivulet reflected its peaceful dwel-

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ling on the south ; while it fronted a verdant lawn, and some acres of arable, whose horizon was skirted by the distant sea. Nor was art wanting to beautify the scene. It was the pride of the neighbouring hamlet to shape a row of limes, that terminated the view in the back ground ; while the tower of the decent church, that stood on an eminence, seemed emulous of raising its moss-grown height above the surrounding foliage, to supply the casements on the right with a pleasing object. The taste of its reverend tenant had scattered a few statues of the Heathen deities among the parterres of the garden. He had turned the course of the stream towards a close shrubbery, where a Naiad seemed to protect its waters.

Such was the retirement of the Vicar of H..... Such was the agreeable recess

cess in which he proposed to lengthen out the remaining thread of his existence; and if ever any life deserved the epithet of happy, it was Mr. Belville's: a life that had never been subjected to the caprice of party, or the inquietude of personal interest: a life that had "kept the noiseless tenor of its way" at a distance from patrician *banteur*, and secluded from the hurry of courts; whose moral excellence entitled it to the highest eulogium; whose temperance had joys unknown to satiety; nor had it been ever tormented by anxious desires on the one hand, or perplexing fears on the other.

Studious rather of ease than fame, and contented rather with the comforts of life, than ambitious of its more elevated and highly-seasoned enjoyments, he had refused a more public station in the church, with larger

revenues, to pass in tranquillity, and the endearing smiles of his parishioners, the remainder of that life which had been devoted to their service, on a living whose annual income was three hundred pounds.

Such was the father of the amiable Maria, who, deprived in early infancy of the tenderness of maternal care, had under his inspection imbibed the first rudiments of language, and the first principles of every virtue. Beneath the genial influence of such an instructor she could not but have acquired those accomplishments which are ever attractive of attention. Soft and gentle in her disposition, she had cherished all those kindly virtues that tend to produce happiness among mankind, by alleviating the sorrows of human existence. Mild and affable in her deportment to those whose situation

had

had confined them to the humbler spheres of life, she had gained universally the hearts of the meanest inhabitants of the village ; while the warmth of her benevolence, and the extensiveness of her charity, firmly united them in her interest, and drew down the choicest blessings on her head. Fraught with the tenderest and most lively sensibility, her heart bled even for the silent victim, which Nature has ordained to supply the wants of man ; and bitterly would she deplore the fatal necessity that urged to the commission of what seemed to her so cruel an action.

Tempered, however, with firmness, her sensibility was not the dupe of licentious passion ; and without suspicion on the one hand, or weakness on the other, she knew to be the warm friend, and the sincere mistress. She had

studied with success the arts of music and painting; which, while they harmonized her mind, and formed the elegance of her taste, served to fill up those vacant hours which the solitude of retirement, and want of society, would otherwise have extended to a tedious length.

Thus distinguished by the virtues of the mind, she was by no means destitute of personal accomplishments. Her stature, though not tall, was of that pleasing size which wins the approbation of every beholder. It was at once formed to captivate the curious observer, and awe the licentious gaze of the libertine. Mild pity beamed in her eye, and shot benevolence from its cerulean throne. Her complexion was of the purest white, suffused by a lively glow that played upon her cheek. The feminine soft-

ness

nels of her features was endear'd by a bewitching and animating smile. Her countenance, though not the model of perfect symmetry, was yet so interesting, and so true an index to her mind, that it expressed all the unsuspecting confidence of purest innocence, blended with the most delicate and refined sensibility. Her figure, which was aided by the simple elegance of the Grecian dress, seemed cast in the softest mould; and Nature, in her happiest mood, seemed in her composition to have rejected every jarring and rebellious principle.

Formed as she was for rational enjoyments, her soul was continually imbibing fresh draughts of pleasure from objects that escaped the notice of the heedless observer. That spangled firmament, which the unlettered swain beholds with a vacant gaze, wrought

the deepest impressions of the dignity of its Creator. How would she loiter on the green turf, to view the refracted glow of the setting sun's effulgence! And when Evening veiled the earth with her solemn, sable robe, she would steal in silence through the sheltering woodland; in conscious innocence she would delight to trace the chequered shade, while the moon darted her mildest beams through the parting branches, and, as queen of the blue expanse, emitted her rays on all sides through the pervious gloom. With enthusiastic ardour she would listen to the plaintive notes of the nightingale; those notes, which, so nearly according with her own gentle sentiments, taught her to tune the hymn of praise and pious effusion to the great Power of the night. So amiable was the character of Maria, who

who had scarcely completed her seventeenth year.

A youth, of an open and ingenuous aspect, was the second offspring of his worthy parent. Enlivened by the ruddiest tint of health, his complexion was not shaded by the gloom of Saturnine melancholy. Blooming, sportive, brave, active, he engaged the affections of every familiar; and while the jocund levity, that characterized his manners, might perhaps have contracted the stern brow of seniority, an open manliness forced it to admire, and pleaded an excuse for his juvenile frolics. Though Charles had but just attained his fifteenth year, he was warm in his passions, possessed a fervour of boldness uncommon to his age, and rather inclined to an irascibility, that, far from malicious, was soon to be softened. Formed for

friendship, he could resent an insult; and, from a contempt of meanness, he was generous in the extreme.

Hitherto he had been trained under the ever-watchful guardianship of a parental eye; a faithful and constant monitor, that had never failed to observe his every motion. It had beheld with fond delight that principle, which had so early discovered its propensity to noble actions. With anxious care had it endeavoured to cultivate and fertilize the soil that seemed to promise growth to each ingrafted virtue; a soil, that would not yield to the insinuations of vice, and where the flowers, that she might plant on some future day, would blossom perhaps for a season, but take no deep root. With pleasure had it beheld that good-humoured generosity, which, as a smaller sun, enlivened the hearts of those

those who were favoured with its author's more immediate regards, by its animating and vivifying beams. But, on the other hand, a tender fearfulness could not but sometimes steal across the breast of his anxious and affectionate parent, lest the unbounded range of his child's benevolence might hereafter border on extravagance: a solicitude lest those exalted sentiments, which shone so conspicuously in the *youth*, should hurry by their impetuosity, and involve in difficulties the *man*.

In his education, he had chosen for his son the most approved classics, and had invariably marked the most beautiful passages: like the assiduous bee, he had extracted the sweets of each volume, and particularly commented on those parts which seemed to have a tendency to the promotion of the moral and social duties.

Able as he was, and not inadequate to the task, in rearing his beloved boy, he found a pleasing alleviation to those sorrows, which derived their source from the loss of an amiable woman, whom he had wedded with that disinterestedness which marked the rest of his conduct, and who expired in giving birth to his little favourite. It had been his chief employ; to his son's tuition he had dedicated the hours of leisure; and thus, while it varied the amusements of the day, it served, with the powerful aids of reason and religion, to efface the image of her, who would else have been continually before his eyes.

It was now determined to remove his beloved Charles to Eton, on the advantageous offer of a friend, who had sufficient interest to enter him on the foundation; when (on the first approach

approach of spring, after a night in which the vegetable world had been watered by a gentle shower) this charming family had scarcely partaken of a frugal, but peaceful refreshment, ere the Vicar summoned his son to a bower which terminated the view of the enclosed shrubbery. The sun had risen a few degrees above the horizon, and the humble violet was exhaling its odours, that were doubly sweetened by the falling of the late rain. The path which led them to the arbour lost itself in a pleasing variety of lilachs and liburnums, which art and fancy had trained in circular wreaths, as a shelter from the sudden storm.

“ The roof
Of thickest covert was inwoven shade,
Laurel and myrtle: underfoot the violet,
Crocus and hyacinth, with rich inlay,
Broider'd the ground, more colour'd than with stone
Of costliest emblem.”

CHAP. II.

THE VICAR'S SPEECH---HIS SON DEPARTS FOR
ETON.

"How to live happiest; how avoid the pains,
The disappointments, and disgusts of those
Who would in pleasure all their hours employ;
The precepts here of a divine old man
I could recite."

Armstrong.

THEY entered the bower, and
seating himself on the side which
fronted the enclosure, the good old
man tenderly took his son's hand, and
placed him by his side; then, with a
voice full of gentleness and eloquent
persuasion, that trembled as he spoke,
he thus addressed him:—

"You

" You are now, Charles, arrived at an age when the passions usually begin to bias the principles of action, and warp the inclinations of reason and judgement. The objects and pursuits which now engage your attention will most probably determine your future character. Think not, then, that you are at liberty to pursue what path you please, or to direct your steps wherever the petulance of fancy, and the capriciousness of fashion, shall perchance allure you. Still less imagine yourself sent into the world to be the mere creature of pleasure, and the dupe of sensual gratification. No, Charles, believe me, man was formed for nobler purposes; a being, destined to exist for ever, has other objects and pursuits, higher and more dignified than those which flow from the indulgence of animal life.

" Yet

“ Yet think not, I would persuade you, that that good Being who brought us into existence, designed this world as one continued scene of mortification and self-denial. No; there is not a plainer and more demonstrable truth, than that God designed the happiness of his creatures. He has given us all our senses, as so many inlets to various agreeable pleasures, and provided means to gratify them in every species of enjoyment. He has endowed us with powers and capacities of the most exalted nature, and allows us the use of every enjoyment that does not tend to injure ourselves or others. The acquisition of knowledge, the improvements of science, the duties of our station, and the exercise of the relative and social virtues, are pleasures, which, while they enhance the solid comforts of life, leave no sting or remorse behind them.

“ You

“ You are placed in a world which abounds with temptations : they lie on every side, and assume the most pleasing and captivating appearances. Your season of life is more peculiarly exposed to their attack ; since, like a skilful enemy, they begin the assault on the weakest side, and where there is the least probability of resistance. The weakness of understanding, and the want of experience, lay the unsuspecting confidence of youthful innocence more fatally open to their destructive snares. The voice of the enchantress, Pleasure, calls us with a bewitching eloquence, while the susceptibility of our own hearts too powerfully pleads her cause, and often unites in our seduction. Too easily we commit our bark to the insidious waters, and fancy that no storm is nigh : fondly we imagine that every ruder wind is hushed, and that every boister-

boisterous blast shall cease to blow while we glide gently down the clear, smooth stream, and resign ourselves to thoughtless indolence and ease: but no sooner have we quitted the shore, and trusted ourselves to the faithless element, than the loud tempest begins to howl, and the waves to roll, and we are convinced, too late, that what we took for a gentle stream, inclosed by flowery and verdant banks, is now a wide and extensive ocean, without a coast, without a harbour. At length we find that Reason and Prudence, who should have presided at the helm, have been negligently left behind us, and our bark, which had been long the sport of contending elements, is, after all our fruitless efforts, dashed upon some hidden rock, or swallowed up in the profound abyss.

“Old

“ Old age is too often suspected of chusing a theme for pompons declamation, when it professes to warn the inexperienced of the dangers which threaten them in their voyage through life, and is accused unjustly of envying others the enjoyment of those pleasures, in which it can now no longer participate, and forgetting that it once was young. On the contrary, it is this very remembrance which makes the aged parent so anxious in his charge, so earnest in his advice. He knows the dangers, and has felt the difficulties which oppose the early adventurer in the road to virtuous fame: he has seen the inconveniences, and is therefore best qualified to instruct how they may be most easily avoided. The continued observation of a long course of years, a knowledge of the world, and of the human heart, and perhaps too the fatal lesson of experience,

ence, may have furnished him with the persuasion of this melancholy truth, that the life of man is beset on every side with snares and temptations, which the most wakeful vigilance cannot always escape.

"You need scarcely be informed, my Charles, that as Virtue can alone ensure happiness, so Vice has always her attendant Misery. The monster, fair as she is, and of an engaging appearance, yet hides a poignard in her bosom, with which, while she caresses, she wounds. We know the terror, the dread, the apprehension of a nocturnal depredator; we know, too, the painful anxiety and restless fears of ambition. But as these are wretched on the one hand, so is the sensualist and libertine on the other. Ask the man of pleasure, if his joys are refined? the man of the world, if his
delights

delights are lasting? Alas! they will both rue the fatal mistake that led them to imagine bliss in the pursuits of the former, or duration in the gaieties of the latter. What would not the epicure exchange, when satiated by a luxurious and delicate meal, for half the joy that the peasant feels in his plain and homely diet! It is the very nature of Vice, through all her gradations, to become a self-tormentor. The intoxicated debauchee seeks, by a fresh goblet, to drown the remembrance of the past. A simple falsehood heightens its criminality, with a number of base prevarications and plausible excuses, in which it is unavoidably involved by the shame of the aggressor.

“Remorse, confusion, and penitence, are the necessary consequence of guilt. There is a principle within

us,

us, my son, an innate approbation of good, which never fails to condemn: it was bestowed on man by his Creator, when as yet the new-formed mould was scarcely animated, or the flood of life had begun its course; and (blessed be the goodness of the Deity!) it is not so totally depraved, nor has man so entirely forgotten the divine image, whose impression he received with his existence, as to destroy a conviction of moral evil. No; his nature, though it too often pursue the reverse, applauds those virtues that tend to the general order; approves and admires the action whose professed aim it is, to establish a social harmony. Hence it views, with no small degree of admiration, the relationship of one individual to another; a relationship which virtue can alone support, and whose amiable province it is, to link mankind in one great brotherhood.

“ O then,

" O then, my Charles, beware of sensual delights ! These tend to eradicate the refined feelings, that give birth to the softer sentiments of humanity : they dissolve the nobler qualities of the soul ; they relax and enervate the man, and debase him, by degrees, from the exalted rank that he holds in the scale of being, to an equality with the brute.

" But would you avoid such a degradation, would you shrink from a scene so painful, so irksome in the bare description ; would you renounce the follies of mankind, and turn from the flattering delusion, beware of the first approach of vice ! It will steal upon you imperceptibly, and undermine your principles ; it will paint in engaging colours the most debauched character ; it will amuse you with the pleasing idea of rendering yourself agreeable

agreeable, polite, accommodating.—Will the miser accuse himself of meanness? He will tell you, that he cultivates a frugal thriftiness.—Will the spendthrift acknowledge the charge of extravagance? He will soften his foible by the glossing name of a cheerful and open-hearted benevolence. You will see religion, too, through the gloomy mist of prejudice; and, seen through so false a medium, her paths will appear dull and unsocial.

“ My dearest child, let not the insinuations, the allurements, the ridicule of hardened associates, bereave *you* of that native modesty, of which they have bereaved *themselves*: a modesty that was given in a larger proportion to youth, as that season wanted the aid of experience, for a guard and protection to virtue. They will treat with contempt that piety, which, if found
ed

ed on a firm and solid basis, cannot, indeed, be shaken by the scoffing sneer, or insipid jest of the railer. Ever have in mind those incomparable lines of the Grecian sage of old—

“ Still the baneful darts
Of calumny, of malice, of reproach,
Shall storm thy virtue; but award their aims,
Inflexible, undaunted, firm, secure.”*

“ If you perceive your inclination yielding to the united attacks of fallacious argument, and ridicule, let the many instances of ancient virtue remind you of the possibility of withstanding so powerful an assault. What was the fate of the great mistress of the world, when once she fought the pleasures of luxury, and bade adieu to reason and virtue? ‘Roses have thorns;

* Aur. Carm. Pythag.

and the flowery bush is but a lurking-place for the snake. You will find it difficult to retract, for severe is the hour of retrospection, unhappy the moments of repentance ! They may, indeed, secure a future circumspection, but they cannot remedy the past.

“ Reflect then seriously, my son, on what I have said, and receive it as the admonition of one who consults for your welfare and interest. I have, indeed, enlarged on some particular heads, because we are soon to part ; but let not my absence prompt you to the commission of what you may afterwards have cause to regret. Remember that there is an eye which always sees you ; an eye, that pervades all space ! Remember, too’—Here a domestic announced the arrival of the chaise, that was to convey the young adventurer from

from the worthiest of parents, and the best of sisters.

They rose to proceed towards the house, where they were joined by the affectionate Maria. She had stolen towards the arbour, but perceiving, through an aperture in the branches, that they were interested in deep conversation, she had chosen to retire, that she might not appear to have unbecomingly intruded ; and, returning to the parlour, she had given vent to those tears which she could not suppress, at her brother's approaching departure, and had assumed an air of cheerfulness, that she might not add to the feelings of her parent. Embracing her beloved Charles, she presented him with a nosegay of the choicest flowerets, whose beauty might amuse him on the road, and which she had gathered with the hand of affection,

tion, during the interval of their absence in the bower.

The good old man, again affectionately taking him by the hand, as he was stepping into the chaise——“ Allow me,” said he, “ my dear boy, for another moment to address you. Among the number of your associates at Eton, there will doubtless be some whose conduct will by no means deserve your imitation: in so large a seminary their characters must be various and different. Chuse your company with discretion.”

The impression which his father's advice had made on the mind of Charles, and the agitation which prevailed during the whole of his speech, conspiring with the moment in which he was to bid adieu to that home, which

which he had never yet left, produced a flood of tears.

Each smack of the driver's whip struck on the hearts of his parent and sister, who followed with eager looks the retreating carriage, and loitered involuntarily at the wicket to catch the last sound of the distant wheels.

CHAP. III.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CASTLE AND GARDENS

---THE SEAT OF THE EARL OF FERMOR---

CHARACTER OF AN OLD MAIDEN LADY OF
QUALITY---FIRST DAY'S AMUSEMENTS.

" Not Persian Cyrus on Ionia's shore
E'er saw such sylvan scenes ; such various art
By genius fir'd, such ardent genius tam'd
By cool judicious art, that in the strife
All-beauteous Nature fears to be outdone."

Thomson.

A FEW miles from the Vicarage, in
an extensive and beautiful park,
stood the family mansion of the earl of
Fermor.

The inclosures contained a circuit of
seven miles, and were agreeably varied
by plantations, busts, and water-falls.

In

In the centre of the gardens, that were disposed in the first taste, the eye was pleasingly surprized with a Chinese Pagoda, whose top was surrounded by a gallery, that commanded an extensive prospect of the neighbouring country. The west end of the park was beautified by a temple, that the late earl had dedicated to the Muses, which he had adorned on the outside with alternate columns and pilastres, of the Ionic and Doric orders, with a suitable freize and cornice of elegant marble. His successor had enriched it within by some paintings, that had been executed by the first Italian masters, and which he had been at some pains to collect on a late continental tour. The several productions of a Reubens, a Titian, and a Raphael, seemed to vie with each other in attracting the admiration, of which they were all so justly deserving. Here a capital piece

of sculpture enchanted with its exact symmetry; there a curious model of ingenious architecture, charmed the fancy of the transported *connoisseur*. Not far removed from this favourite residence of the arts was reared a stately obelisk, that answered the double end of an observatory and museum. The first contained some excellent philosophical instruments; the second abounded with a valuable assortment of natural curiosities, and a collection of figures of strange and uncouth shapes; and a variety of foreign articles, which the late earl, who had been a distinguished naval character, obtained of his dependents, who had visited their native countries. The eastern extremity was terminated by a bold and deeply-sounding cascade, whose awful murmurs were echoed from hollow rocks at its base, on which its waters fell with a violent rapidity, and formed a
delight-

delightful canal, that nearly divided the grounds into two equal parts.

The seat itself possessed all the magnificence of ancient grandeur. A weighty gothic arch frowned, as it were, over the entry ; and the stained windows diffused a solemn gloom through a long and winding hall. The vaulted roof was richly fretted ; and the heavy pillars on the sides were ornamented, some with the branching horns of a buck, and others with some ancient family armour, that was preserved with a fine polish, and mocked the corrosive rust of Time. The hall united with what might be deemed a wide passage, that led to an open area in the centre of the venerable pile, containing a reservoir that was encircled with a thick palisade. The apartments in the western front were connected with a long gallery, from which

was beheld a part of the gardens, that was pleasantly adorned with statues, and a few *jet-d'eaus*. A tower of rudest architecture, whose battlements, though once ponderous, were now much decayed, rose on the eastern side of the building. It opened into a terrace laved by the canal, over which a neat bridge had been newly turned: a few steps, with iron railing, led by an easy descent to the water, to which was fastened a painted bark, that afforded occasional amusement.

Such was the agreeable residence of the noble family of the Harcourts. Its present possessor had succeeded early to the title, and at the age of sixteen set out with his tutor for the continent, to make the grand tour. He had now visited the principal countries of Europe, and was returning to his native England, and the seat of

of his ancestors, to celebrate the completion of his twenty-first year.

During his absence the mansion had been occupied by a maiden aunt, who, together with a brother, the Honourable Captain Harcourt, was the only surviving branch of the family.—

From an unconquerable degree of pride, which had made its appearance in her earliest infancy, and which it had been the chief object of her father's attention, in vain, to eradicate, Lady Deborah had devoted her days to a state of celibacy; though a baron, and an affluent commoner of no mean extraction, had been foremost in the *suite* of her admirers, whom she did not deem sufficiently respectable to be honoured with her hand.—She could trace back her family as far as the Saxon Heptarchy, and found out a near connection with the renowned Egbert.

Egbert. She would talk whole hours on the necessity and importance of distinctions from the vulgar commons, and the grandeur of her great alliances, — Unwilling, as she was, to indulge the idea of one common parent of mankind in our great ancestor Adam, yet she has been sometimes heard to lament the infinite spring of pleasure which must have been unknown to him, from the inability of tracing his origin to some distant and illustrious source. It was her darling passion, her beloved idol, to which she sacrificed every other consideration.

Her person was as amiable as her disposition: — a pair of little grey eyes, between which projected a nose truly aquiline, might hardly be said to enliven a pallid countenance; her upper lip, pale and quivering, yet served to

Egbert.

conceal

conceal its fellow, that was contracted through loss of teeth; and her stature, that at best was below the middle size, was still more lowered by age.

Her peevishness was by no means softened by some frequent fits of the gout, at which seasons her attendants were afraid to approach within the circuit of her crutches, (which, by the bye, she called her *supporters*) as a degraded vizier would have trembled in the presence of his enraged sultan. It even afforded her some consolation, in the most excruciating pains, to reflect that she bore some resemblance to the celebrated Harry the VIIIth, whose temper is well known to have been soured by the confinement of a similar complaint, so that his domestics could not approach him but with evident signs of terror and apprehension.

sion. She affected, too, a particular attachment for chess; and was often heard to declare, that she could not but be delighted with so charming a game; nor was she at all surprized that so sensible a monarch as William the Conqueror should have preferred it to the highest place in his amusements.

Her only favourite study was heraldry, as that served to fan the flame of her vanity; nor would she, on any consideration, be disturbed while closeted with her beloved Guillim. She had embroidered the family arms in some elegant covers for a splendid set of household furniture, belonging to an apartment of which she was particularly fond. That the room might be decorated agreeably to her ludicrous and fanciful imagination, she had directed her upholsterer to manufacture

facture a handsome carpet, whose border (to use the expression of her favourite and celebrated author) was to have been *compony of ruby and topaz*: but the poor tradesman, after a deal of indefatigable endeavour, (for he presumed not to soar so highly in the regions of science) had, by an unlucky mistake, formed it in such a manner as to answer the description of *checky*—for which she discarded him, with his workmanship, for ever from her presence; bidding the ignorant blockhead begone, and purchase the first Guillim that might chance to fall in his way.—

She would frequently interrupt her servants, though they were hastily relating an affair of the utmost importance, and reprobate them for not making use of heraldic terms and expressions; and was once known to refuse a labouring carpenter the exhilarating refreshment of a pint of strong drink,
which

which the poor man had just reached to his lips, because he persevered in calling some rafters by their proper name, (which he had been mending in the roof of the building) in opposition to the unintelligible appellation of *chevrons*.

Her nephew was now returned; and as his birth-day was fast approaching, every elegance that imagination could devise, or art invent, to heighten the festival, was preparing for the occasion.——A numerous company, consisting of the nobility and principal families of distinction in the neighbourhood, within a circuit of twenty miles, had been invited to the fête; and a temporary *hotel* was raised for their accommodation, as it was impossible to dispose of all of them in the castle.

At

At length the day arrived, which was ushered in with a loud peal of the parish bells; and early in the morning a large company of his lordship's tenants and rustics were assembled in the park, gaily decked with ribbons and wreaths of flowers, fantastically twisted. — An elegant and pompous pavilion was erected on one side of the canal, where Lady Deborah, adorned with diamonds, and the captain her brother in his naval uniform, with the young lord, received the congratulations of their numerous visitants; and from whence the company might be spectators of the amusements and sports on the lawn, whose green edge skirted the opposite side of the water.

Among the different habiliments of the day, Sir Richard and Lady Cleveland, whose estate bordered on the earl's,

earl's, were particularly noticed for elegance and beauty: the former appeared in purple velvet, richly embroidered with gold; and the superb dress of the latter was beautifully adorned with spangles, jewels, and foil of various hue, that was disposed in a pleasing manner, and evinced the elegance of her taste.

The Vicar led his daughter through the croud, habited in a neat sable suit. She was dressed in a light blue silk with a train of white muslin—a ribbon encircled her temples, while her head was adorned with a white feather, and her auburn locks were suffered to flow with a careless negligence down her back. There was a certain *je ne sais quoi* in her manners—an ineffable sweetness of modesty—that attracted more eyes than the rich dresses of the other

other fair, who had already paid their compliments.

The ceremony of congratulations was no sooner ended, than there suddenly appeared on the opposite bank of the canal a company of stout young men, whose limbs were seemingly active, nervous, and well proportioned: they were habited in white vests and striped drawers, with knots of blue ribbons pendent from their arms and wrists. They were collected from the neighbouring towns and villages, and had purposely assembled to try their skill in rowing, which an oar that they held in each hand served to indicate. In a short time they were all in their several barges, that had been previously prepared for the occasion, and sailed down the stream, bowing as they passed the pavilion. They all seemed emulous of the mastery; and
victory

victory was doubtful for a while which of the two barges she should favour that were in general the foremost. At length, after a little hesitation, she evidently shewed to which she gave the preference, and the decision was proclaimed by a general shout. The victor, elated with success, immediately hastened to the beautiful Maria, to receive from her fair hands a silver plate, and to be crowned with a chaplet of roses; as the office of rewarding the conqueror had been allotted to the youngest female. The pleasure she seemed to experience in bestowing the grateful gifts of victory won the admiration of all that were present at the scene; and even the old Lady Deborah could not forbear from once softening her features with a complacent smile—those features that more commonly were attended with a contemptuous

temptuous sneer—and forgot for a moment her pride.

To this succeeded some wrestling on the lawn, as the rustics were anxious of exhibiting their skill in the *palæstrian* exercise; though our tender heroine might rather be said to have discovered anxiety, than approbation, lest the combatants might receive any injury; but her fears were happily without foundation.—After their diversions, the rustics were entertained with a cold collation in the gardens, and an elegant dinner was provided for the company in the *botel*.—The day passed on with the greatest order and harmony, till the lengthening shadows betrayed the approach of evening, when his lordship, mounted on a white steed, traversed the park on all sides, and personally distributed some money among the delighted villagers.

The

The *fête* was concluded by a ball, in which Maria was honoured with the young lord's hand.—At length the company began to retire : Maria left the room, conducted by her partner, and

“ On her, as queen,
 A pomp of winning graces waited still,
 And from about her shot darts of desire
 Into all eyes to wish her still in sight.

CHAP. IV.

SECOND AND THIRD DAY'S AMUSEMENTS----

MARIA GOES TO SIR RICHARD CLEVELAND'S.

“ The toil-strung youth,
 By the quick sense of music taught alone,
 Leaps wildly graceful in the lively dance :
 Her ev'ry charm abroad, the village toast,
 Young, buxom, warm, in native beauty rich,
 Darts not unmeaning looks.”

Thomson.

THE next morning arose equally auspicious.—The rustics were again assembled at an early hour ; and, after a hearty breakfast, which was prepared for them upon the lawn, divided into different parties, “ each by the lass he loved.”

The

The diversions commenced with a dance, whose mazes were long and intricate—but withal so regular and harmonious, and so correctly executed as would have done honour to more skilful and elegant performers.—All was joy and merriment.—Each swain had put on his best looks, and seemed emulous of appearing the first in his shepherdess's esteem;—while the care which the females had bestowed in adorning themselves in plain, but neat attire, shewed a mutual desire and inclination to please. The modest leer, and expressive archness of countenance, which they sometimes assumed, and darted with the most artful yet seemingly unaffected softness, now upon their favourite shepherd, and now upon the assembly in general, shewed the little rivalries of the village, and that each wished to draw general as well as particular attention, and

and make new conquests, at the same time that she secured the attachment of her former admirer.

Among the rest, there was one pair, that, from a manifest superiority both in their dress and manners, attracted universal notice. This was the daughter of his lordship's bailiff and his French valet, whom he had hired during his travels, and who was now cutting a conspicuous figure in the dance, from the elegance natural to his country in those lesser graces. The girl, who possessed a degree of softness and sensibility above the maidens of the village, had been noticed by Maria, and received some particular attentions from her; and was now dressed for the occasion by her directions, and according to her taste. She wore a white jacket edged with pink, from which a train of fine muslin fell negligently in folds,

and discovered a beautiful and striking figure. Her hat, which was of straw, garnished with a wreath of roses and alternate lilies and jessamine, was tied under her chin with ribbons of the same colour as her trimming. The genuine glow of health beamed upon her countenance, and the blush of modesty, on seeing herself the object of marked attention, tinged her cheek with living crimson. The exercise of the dance seemed to inspire her with uncommon energy, and added a pleasing animation to her whole form.

The simple beauty of the scene—the mingled joy and harmony—the cheering sound of the pipe, and other rural instruments, to which the neighbouring hills and woods returned their sportive echoes—all conspired to aid the delusion, and bring back the fabled idea of the golden age;—and it
 required

required the help of no very strong and vivid imagination to fancy the ancient Dryads and Naiads were assembled, led by Pan or Sylvanus, as when of old they sported over the flowery vales of Arcady in pristine freedom,—nor disdained to bless the eye of mortals with their innocent and tuneful gambols.

Beneath the spreading foliage of a sheltering oak, whose age had twice told an hundred summers, apart from the general scene, reclined upon a bank of grassy turf, sat the elder matrons and swains (around whose heads Time had now shed his snowy honours) looking attentively on the various feats of the youth, who seemed ambitious of gaining their applause, and of recalling to their recollection the memory of joys long past, which they in turn appeared with pleasure

and delight to see renewed in their rising offspring.

After the dance they filed off in pairs to a distant part of the lawn, removed from observation; and passed the remainder of the day in such innocent games and pastimes as suited their years and the festivity of the present occasion.—Here a party of children amuse themselves with sportive and frolicksome gambols, and entwine each other with garlands; while their little faces wear the contented smiles of health and good-nature;—there some village maidens are deeply interested in the various amusements of hunt the slipper—thread the needle—shuttle-cork, &c.—In a more open part of the park, that was sparingly scattered with trees, the youthful swains were enjoying the pleasing pastime of cricket—others had built a throne of turf, on
which

which they had seated a lovely female, adorned as a goddess, with party-coloured knots and flowers, and were alternately dancing round her, or paying her their rude *devoirs*—a few of the youth, at a little distance from these, were contesting the mastery in leaping; and at intervals brought the most victorious of the rivals to claim an envied kiss from the turf-throned queen.

Such, with many more, were their innocent gambols, till a bell, whose hoarse clamour drowned for a while the murmurings of the distant canal, summoned them to partake of an ox that was roasted to regale them, in the true spirit of ancient English hospitality.

—Several capacious hogsheds were broached on the occasion, so that ere evening began to draw her purple curtain over the hemisphere, or Phœbus

had tinged with saffron hue many a western cloud, jollity and mirth, and frequent joke, had "set the table in a roar."

They parted as kindly as they met, but not perhaps so readily.

Though the diversions of the rustics were different, yet the same state had been observed in the pavilion as before.

The succeeding day was early awakened by the manly sound of a bugle horn, belonging to his lordship's huntsman. The hounds were assembled before the eastern gate, and waited the coming of the earl and several other sportsmen, whose favourite passion he had resolved to indulge; and had directed that they should be agreeably surprized by the rousing saluta-

salutation of the horn. A stag was turned out of the park, that led them a pleasant chase, while the distant hills resounded with their cries. The sport was of long continuance, so that they did not return to the castle till late in the evening, where they spent the remainder of the day in alternate song, and festivity, over a convivial board, and exhilarated their spirits with rosy wine.

As most of the company had now left the mansion, a social dance commenced between those gentlemen who had not hunted, and the few ladies that remained, in a private ball room, that was illumined by some grand chandeliers, while the beams of the wax-tapers, reflected from some superb lustres in a variety of pleasing hues.—The columns were encircled with wreaths, and some elegant festoons de-

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pended from the cornice——several of the pannels contained some beautiful mirrors, and others were painted with figures in imitation of bass relief, and which appeared to be executed by a masterly pencil. To compleat the agreeable scene, a neighbouring orangerie diffused its grateful fragrance; whose refreshing and aromatic sweets were wafted by some gentle gales, at intervals, and charmed the delighted sense.

Nor was the innocent presence of Maria wanting to grace the entertainment. Her pleasing behaviour had secured the affections of Lady Cleveland and her youngest daughter, who was nearly of the same age as Maria, and with whom she had already contracted a seeming intimacy.

Charlotte

Charlotte was a young woman of singular chearfulness and vivacity, and had long wished for a companion with whom she might participate the sweets of friendship, and indulge in pleasing and amusive converse. It was accordingly determined to make the first proposal to the Vicar, without whose permission and consent they neither wished nor expected her to accompany them.

After a little demur, (in which he declared, that however his daughter's departure might be against his own inclination, yet, if agreeable to herself, he could not but be sensible of the honour that they had intended to confer on his family) the Vicar was prevailed on to consent, with a promise that she should return in a short time—and a reply on the side of Lady Cleveland, that she looked on

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her-

herself as the obliged party. They directly hastened to acquaint Maria with the success of their interview; who, notwithstanding she was overjoyed with the pleasing information, yet could not but regret, though for a short time, at leaving her beloved and respected parent.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

A DISPUTE BETWEEN SOME CHARACTERS IN
HIGH LIFE----REFLECTIONS ON IRREGULAR
PASSION---A NOBLE PEER HASTENS TO LON-
DON.

“The passions, which the God of Nature originally planted in the heart of man, ought to remain undestroyed within his breast ; but he should learn to direct them to their proper ends.”

Zimmerman.

THE late amusements at the castle had not passed without leaving a poignancy behind them. Lord Fermor had involuntarily conceived a passion for Maria, which he could not easily forget : even amidst the brilliant entertainments and splendid feasts which had occupied so much of his

attention, she had employed a distinguished portion of his thoughts.—
 Young, beautiful, and unaffected, she had wound a way unawares into his soul, and lorded it with imperial sway.—
 —Possessed of a form and countenance expressive of the amiableness of her mind—of an “attitude all soul,”—and a movement all eloquence—she had unavoidably, and irresistibly, made an impression on the earl which he thought could not be easily effaced.

His first determination was, to solicit her of her father in marriage; but the uncommon pride of his aunt, who regarded birth and ancestry even to superstition, would, he well knew, put an absolute barrier in his way, which it would be difficult to remove.—
 —To persist in his intention, contrary to Lady Deborah’s approbation, and even in spite of her resentment, would,

would, he was assured, be highly impolitic, as he had very great expectations from her affection and regard for him :——and to endeavour to gain her consent to an attachment so ill-suited to his rank and so despicable in her eyes, were an hopeless effort——since she would have considered any of her family degraded who should have presumed to make an alliance, even with the first peer of the kingdom who could not trace back his origin distinctly for at least seven centuries.

The attentions he had paid Maria at the fête had already excited her spleen, though she considered them as trifling :——trifling, indeed, they might appear to her——but to others, who considered them as the genuine effusions of a decided predilection, they were of a very serious cast ; but

she

she deigned not to harbour even a suspicion of the kind.

“ It was very ill-judged of you, my lord, and discovered but little politeness or taste, to take the hand of Miss Belville at the ball, in preference to so many ladies of superior birth and merit.”

“ Yet, my lady,” replied the earl, “ while we are paying the deference and respect that is due to our rank, and the dignity of our stations——is that virtue——that bewitching innocence, which shines so conspicuously in Miss Belville——that worth, which surpasses the dignity of titles, and smiles at the ostentation of elevated rank ;——nay, I may add, that worth which requires but to be seen to be admired”——(for he had perceived that her ladyship was not totally insensible

sensible to the amiableness of her manners at the late festival)——“is all this excellence to be neglected, and give place to what it so eminently supercedes?”

“Mightily rhetorical, truly!” rejoined his contemptuous aunt; “excellent argument!—profoundest advocate for virtue!—that while he endeavours to support her dignity, would undermine her firmest foundations!—What constitutes the order and harmony of society?—the infinite gradations of ranks and degrees among its respective individuals. If then, by a meanness of condescension, we bow down our abject neck, and stoop below the dignity of our character, like a planet moving out of its orbit, we endanger the whole sphere.—No! my lord,—think not, but that the lofty

lofty cedar is more exalted than the humble violet."

"True, madam," returned the earl; "but that violet is withal so grateful to the sense, and possesses such a fund of innocent sweetness, that I know not how I should prove an enemy to the order of the vegetable world by allotting it the primary place in the scale of my affections."

"Yet," says she, "were the violet capable of reflection, it would forget that it was the lowliest flower in the garden, and arrogate to itself a superiority over the cedar, which Nature never could have designed.——By giving your hand to Miss Belville, you may have done her a material injury:——she will exalt herself above her station, and amuse herself with the delusive idea, that she is superior to those

those whose birth and title ought, in reality, to command her utmost respect and veneration ; — those, too, whom I could not censure, were they to treat *you* with the disrespect that you merited.—Look at the distractions of a neighbouring kingdom !—From whence did they originate ?—---from a neglect of that deference that is due to superior rank. They have thrown down the monument of royal grandeur, and wounded aristocracy in its most vital parts.—

“ Hence the calamity that obtains—hence the distraction that desolates their country—hence the extinction of every virtue from its detested soil !

“ I am sorry, my lord, *very* sorry, to perceive you possess so little of the spirit of your noble ancestors, as to endeavour to justify a conduct, which
you

you cannot but be convinced is highly reprehensible. How would that dear, good man, your great grandfather, have been mortified, could he have known that you had paid such deference to commoners!—I recollect him well, though you cannot form any idea of him, but from the portrait at the end of the long gallery. *He* [God rest his soul] was a fine man—a man of spirit; It is to his generous actions, as you well know, that we are indebted for the *lion rampant* which so eminently graces our arms.—But follow your own inclinations—cherish an attachment for your amiable Miss Belville; nay, marry her, if you please. How excellently will she support so favourable a change of circumstances?—how charming will be her behaviour, when dignified with the title of Lady Fermor! You may then, perhaps, rue your mistake. Believe me, my lord,

that

that if we neglect to support our dignity on our *own* side, it is little to be wondered at, if we should immediately become lowered in the esteem and admiration of *others*.

“ At present you are young and inconsiderate: perhaps on some future day you will be convinced of the truth of what I have been saying, and perceive the absurdity of your conduct.”

So saying, she left the room in a fit of rage and mortification; not a little piqued at the meanness of the heir of the ancient and honourable estates and possessions of the Fermor family.

Thus frustrated in his hopes on one side, he turned his thoughts to less honourable designs. The idea of so much beauty enchanted him; and he determined,

determined, if possible, to get the possession, if not by those fair and open means which the sacred law of honour dictates, yet by the more subtle and detested arts of seductive stratagem. But the determination cost him no small pang. He had been early taught to respect the social tie which links mankind together in mutual intercourse, and to consider the least infringement of it as tending to the subversion of the public welfare, and even the existence of a community.

Actuated as men are by passion, rather than by principle; and led by the whim of caprice, more than guided by the steady rule of moral rectitude, he saw the necessity of establishing laws to restrain and punish the offender who should dare to violate the defined and sacred rights of society: but at the same time he saw the
inefficacy

inefficacy of laws to bind the determined villain, and the impotency of human punishments to stop the inundation of vice.

He knew, too, there were crimes, which the law, with all its provisions, could not reach ; and the experience of a day taught him how little power legal restrictions possessed over the licentious heart. He saw, therefore, the necessity of erecting another court of judicature in the human breast—he saw the necessity of consulting the moral principle, and abiding by its decisions. This was a monitor whose dictates could not deceive ; and whose awful voice, uttering in firm and unequivocal language this divine precept, that “ we should do to others as we would others should do to us,” established a rule of conduct that was calculated to supply the deficiency of law,

law, and preserve the rights and interests of society in peace and harmony.

These were sentiments which, one would imagine, must awe and govern the mind into which they could obtain admission. True it is, indeed, that he did not attempt an argument on the other side of the question : but his feelings were so strangely agitated, and his passions, which were by no means gentle, but, on the contrary, imperious masters, seemed to oppose every barrier, and bear down all opposition.

One moment, smiling in hope, he seemed inclined to indulge the idea, that his aunt might be brought, by perseverance and entreaty, to acquiesce in an union she now so much reprobated, and which was so essential
to

to his happiness; the next, frowning in despair, when he reflected upon her unconquerable pride, and the natural *hauteur* of her temper, he drove the idea from his breast, as vain and chimerical. Again the flood of passion returns, and again he is swept away by the undulating tide. — Yet he pauses — and again recovering, refuses to resign himself wholly to its impulse, in so dark and abhorred a scheme.

It was in this situation, when his mind was divided between right and wrong, and fluctuating between desire and duty, that he opened a letter from his steward, which informed him that an old claim had been renewed to a large part of the family estate, which, for the three last generations, had given continual occasion to disputes, and had never been clearly ascertained to be

be the lawful property of the Harcourts.

Alarmed at the contents, he set off immediately for the metropolis, to prevent, if possible, any farther progress in the business, and to endeavour to accommodate matters without bringing them to an extreme issue.

He had learnt that the pretensions of his family to those estates hung upon a very slender thread; and that, but for the sudden death of the first claimant, and the minority of the next heir, the cause would long ago have been disputed in the Court of Chancery: he wished, therefore, to wave the contest, and was busily employed in using every endeavour for that purpose.

CHAP. VI.

THE HEROINE IS INTRODUCED TO PERSONS OF
FASHION----CHARACTER OF A YOUNG LIEU-
TENANT.

"He was in every respect formed to please."

Zimmerman.

MARIA, whose vanity was not at all increased by the attentions shewn her at the castle, nor her feelings at all flattered by the earl's particular behaviour, enjoyed the same tranquillity of mind which usually attended her—unruffled, undisturbed. The warmth of his temper, and the passionate manner of his address, had rather alarmed than pleased her; but her surprize was no sooner over, than she seemed to forget his partiality.

and resume, as it were, her wonted independence of such casual and accidental objects.

She indulged in the calm delights of which she was ever susceptible, while at the delightful seat of Sir Richard Cleveland, which, though it was situated in the midst of an extensive forest, was not entirely devoid of prospect, as it was surrounded with eminences that overlooked the trees, and whence the eye could penetrate to an amazing distance.

Here she was introduced to persons of the first distinction, who were enjoying the summer season at their respective residences. But though the ceremony and *etiquette*, that were generally observed on such occasions, could not be said to be altogether consonant to the free and liberal sentiments

iments that she had always entertained of friendship and society——yet, by remarking and criticising on a variety of characters, who would otherwise have escaped her notice, she acquired a certain degree of pleasing knowledge. Candid in her decisions, she knew not to prejudge; nor censured till she had fairly examined.

By some, she was treated with that agreeable affability which is the genuine offspring of the untainted heart, and whose virtues have not been blighted by the poisonous blast of vanity, or destroyed by supercilious ostentation:—by others, those advances which could not have been esteemed as the “obvious or obtrusive” effect of an assuming petulance, were immediately damped and repulsed by their insolent and insufferable *hauteur*.

Among the latter class might be numbered the eldest of Lady Cleveland's daughters. She regarded her with a look of the most ineffable contempt, and would often observe, with a sarcastical sneer, that "she wondered her mother could think of introducing to the family such an affected and low-bred creature." She saw, too, with a jealous envy the superiority of Miss Belville's accomplishments; and plainly perceived that she was endued with qualifications of which she was conscious herself was destitute. Unwilling as she was to believe it, she was, nevertheless, for the first time, necessitated to confess, that her mental and personal endowments were more than equalled by their new visitor's. She not only felt the superiority of Maria's understanding, but found, to her infinite disappointment and regret, after whole hours spent

at

at her toilet, the inefficacy of *rouge*, when contrasted with the genuine glow of Nature. She had spared no pains to heighten her charms as much as possible at the celebration of the earl's majority, in the hope of making so valuable a conquest, or at least of being honoured by his hand;—but, like many others, she had been equally disgusted and surprized at the preference shewed to Miss Belville, whose confusion at so unexpected an honour, to any other but the eye of envy, would have been very evident: — the young lord, indeed, had himself perceived it; but under the impulse of a passion, which was no sooner awakened by a sight of her beauty, than strengthened by her enchanting conversation, he had deviated from that politeness, for which he was generally admired, and preferred the plain Miss

E 3 Belville

Belville to so many of superior birth.

This circumstance, added to the torture of such reflections, and a temper the very reverse of her sister's, was a never-failing source of the highest mortification—a vexation that was continually fermenting; and it was long ere she could recover from the effects of that resentment which had discovered itself at the castle, by her quitting it the same evening, under pretence of indisposition.

Miss Belville, from some manifest instances of neglect on the part of the haughty Augusta, concluded that her company was by no means desirable.—A persuasion of this kind could not but affect her, as her whole endeavours had been directed to please.—It cast a gloom over the pleasures that she

she would otherwise have experienced at Sir Richard's. She had, however, no sooner discovered it, than she redoubled her efforts to obviate the irksome though unjust prejudice—but in vain; and she would have found herself in a very distressful situation, had it not been for the kind attentions of Charlotte, and the marked respect of the company that mostly frequented the baronet's.

Among the numerous visitors at Sir Richard's, during the stay of Maria, was an officer of the name of Stanley, a lieutenant in a regiment of foot, and the nephew of Lady Cleveland.

He was young, lively, and entertaining—of a fine figure, and elegant address:—but though naturally gay and sprightly in his temper, by no means disposed to levity or fashion-

able licentiousness. On the contrary, a deep shade of sensibility tinged his most lively moments, and gave him frequently an air of seriousness, which, while it gained the confidence, could not by any means be construed into an assumed gravity.—His soul was formed for all the luxury of the more mild and gentle passions; while a manly and determined dignity supported him from becoming the victim of an effeminate softness, and yielding to a wild and enthusiastic impulse. He was not weak enough to be carried away by the stream of passion, while he felt with energy and ardour.

It is impossible that two hearts, whose sentiments are at once amiable and congenial, should long, after the discovery, remain disunited.

There

There is something in a virtuous sensibility, that wishes to attach itself to a similar object. In fact, such dispositions are united from the very beginning of their existence—*essentially* united—they differ only in modes and forms. It is the same breath that first infused the principle of life into both—the same influence that animates and governs both—the same *vis animæ* that proportions the hopes, the fears, the wants, the desires, the inclinations, and aversions of each. The affection may indeed long lie latent, and unknown; but the connection nevertheless exists, and, attracted towards the same centre, at last discovers itself in a firm and rooted attachment.

Such was it in the present instance. Stanley saw, felt, and acknowledged the distinguishing excellence and superior worth of Maria.—So much

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softness

softness and gentleness, such “winning mildness and attractive smiles” dwelt in her countenance; while such suavity of manners and unaffected politeness shone conspicuous in her behaviour—that his heart was soon surprized into the most ardent and passionate tenderness for so amiable an object.

Maria, on the other hand, was not insensible to the merit of a man, whom she considered in every point of view as deserving that friendship he seemed anxious to obtain. His apparent integrity, and candour in deciding on the actions of others; his refined taste, and delicacy of sentiment; his generous humanity and benevolence—all strongly vibrated in unison with the feelings of her own breast, and obliged her to bestow on him the warmest approbation. But his

his accomplishments in those exterior graces, which add charms to virtue, and make even goodness shine with accumulated lustre;—his polished manners, engaging address, and lively, entertaining, and instructive conversation—went nearer to her heart, and endeared him insensibly to her affections.

They had known each other in their infancy; and in that early period, when they were fluttering in the morning sun-beam of life, their manners had mutually pleased and attracted each other. The buds, then pleasing, had now expanded themselves in full-blown honours, and grew sweet to sense, and grateful to the eye.—
Erewhile——

“ They lov’d ; but such their guileless passion was,
 As in the dawn of time inform’d the heart
 Of innocence, and undissembling truth.
 ’Twas *friendship*, heightened by the mutual wish :
 Th’ enchanting hope, and sympathetic glow,
 Beam’d from the mutual eye.”

But *now*, the gentle behaviour and delicate approach of Stanley, when contrasted with the eager and passionate warmth of Lord Fermor, had entirely gained the heart of Maria, though she feared to confess it to herself, and was almost startled at the new and unusual sensations that thrilled in her throbbing breast.

Stanley, on the other side, who felt the flame of love in all its purity and force, felt also the flame of gratitude kindle with it at the same time, and was prevented from declaring his passion to its lovely object, only from those

those motives of honour and delicacy, which always influence the virtuous and modest mind——for, to the father of Maria was he indebted chiefly for the commission which he now held in the army.

The mother of Stanley being early left a widow, with an infant son, and a confined income, had retired to the village of H....., to forget at once the splendour of her former opulence, and the unkindness of friends.

During her residence in that retreat, she had formed an intimate acquaintance with the Vicar, to whom she had related her history; and who, ever ready to bind up the bruises, and pour the oil of comfort into the wounds of an afflicted heart, had soothed her sorrows, and beguiled the sad remembrance of her woes by his friendly and
conso-

consolatory advice. Her son, who in his early years discovered a promising and brilliant genius, had attracted the notice of the Vicar; and, prevailed on partly by the entreaties of his mother, (who wished to keep him under her fond eye, and the instruction of so good a man as Mr. Belville) and partly from his own inclination and desire to cultivate so excellent a soil, and cherish the seeds of knowledge, which seemed to promise so plenteous a harvest—he had himself undertaken the care of his education, free from any pecuniary reward, which Mrs. Stanley had repeatedly offered, and he had as obstinately refused.

His mother, however, lived not to see the fruits of her own fostering care, or the labours of this good man. She left him, at the age of sixteen, an orphan to the wide world, and exposed
to

to all the inconveniences of so forlorn a situation.—With a small pittance of fortune, which could hardly serve for more than to set him afloat on the great ocean of life, he was left to struggle against a load of hardships, which might, and *must*, oppose him, and to fight his way through a host of surrounding foes.

In this mournful exigency, the friendly, and, it may be said, *paternal* aid of Mr. Belville stepped in to his relief. He saw the horrors which awaited him, if given up to the indiscreet inexperience of youth: he saw the dangers which threatened him, if no friend should take him by the hand, and conduct him up the craggy steep that leads to fame and virtue;—he saw, and he felt his embarrassment. —To provide for him suitably to his wishes, from his own scanty revenues,

nues, he was unable, in justice to his family; and he knew no alternative, (as his relations lived far distant, and had taken little notice of his mother) but to apply to some powerful friend to assist him in so glorious an undertaking.

In this critical conjuncture, he determined to make a request to the earl of Fermor, (the father of the present earl, and his patron) to procure for him some eligible post in the naval or military department of his country—an employment, to which the young man was so far from being averse, that it flattered his favourite propensity, and met his warmest wishes.

The earl was no sooner applied to than he used his readiest endeavours to promote his interest; and in less than a twelvemonth procured for him a commis-

commission in a marching regiment, that was ordered upon immediate service in the East Indies.

The little fortune which had been left him by his mother, was nearly exhausted in fitting him out for such an expedition.

At length he took leave of his worthy friend, and embarked for the distant country to which he had been stationed. He had served there five years with the greatest honour and reputation, and was now returned to enjoy the society of his friends, and the pleasures of his native country.

He had not been long in England before he heard that the Clevelands had purchased an estate adjoining Lord Fermor's, and immediately hastened to Sir Richard, to whom he brought

brought intelligence of his eldest son, who had lately been elected a judge in the Bengal Council, and who had taken great notice of Stanley while in the country, as a young man of rising merit, and strongly recommended him to his father's approbation at his return.

Sir Richard, who had not indeed noticed his nephew before he left England, now welcomed him sincerely; and earnestly offered him his friendship and interest to serve him, in any manner he might be able.

So true is the observation, that those who avoid us in adversity, like something pestilent and baneful, flutter around us in the bright sunshine of prosperity, when all is gay and smiling; and willingly offer their services, when they think there is the least

least probability of our accepting them.

After a short stay at his uncle's, he intended to pay a visit at the Vicarage, on purpose to thank the worthy man who had been the source of all his former good fortune, and to whom he *now* looked for all his future schemes of happiness.

Possessed of but little, and indebted even for that little to his kind and noble conduct, he felt the full force of gratitude, and disdained to strike at the hand which had been held out to raise him.

Though impressed with an ardent and generous affection for Maria, yet his sense of delicacy prevailed so far over his passion, that he dared not avow it;—convinced that, in every point

point of view, an application of that sort must embarrass the good old man ; and even if successful and approved, could entail nothing but Poverty, and all her ghastly train, upon his amiable daughter. He determined, therefore, rather to confine his passion to his own breast, and, by stifling, endeavour to quench it ; than by obtruding it untimely, and inconsiderately injure its lovely and deserving object.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

DESCRIPTION OF A GROTTO-----A DISPUTE---
 SERIES OF ACCIDENTS.

“ When panting in the wave,
 I struggled, Life and this alone to save.”

Falconer.

THERE is something that captivates in rustic simplicity, whose charms are unattainable by art.—No polished surface of variegated marble—no chequered pavement—no columns of hewn stone, adorned a secluded grotto, whose cavity was formed at the foot of a declining hill, in the thickest part of Cleveland forest.

The circling ivy that crept around its cell, was sweetly interwoven with
 the

the woodbine and playful jessamine; while the tendrils of a spreading harebell were alternately contrasted and entwined with either, creating a pleasing disorder:—their crowding umbrage seemed to refuse admission to the piercing ray of noon; and the cool zephyrs rejoiced to find an asylum, where they might safely expand their gelid pinions, and winnow their leafy passage through the thickened foliage that obscured the farthest-receding extremity of the grot, whose shade was scarcely penetrated by a faint and awful glimmering.—A few shells had been fancifully scattered around, that graced the entrance, and relieved the green moss with their transparent involutions. Near it, some palms and beaches had been planted:—their roots were watered by the course of an adjoining stream, whose broken murmurs were not unheard by the responsive

five

five grove. — The Genius of the wood returned its echo — it winded round the gardens of the neighbouring mansion, and was lightly brushed by the willows that impended its crystal surface.

This agreeable retreat, so admirably calculated to favour meditation, and indulge the contemplative visions of the philosopher, was ascended by some steps of velvet herbage, that led to a decent bench; where the two sisters, with Captain Stanley and Maria, were enjoying the cooling breezes, and resting their wearied limbs, after a long and tedious ramble through the forest.

The summer was far advanced, and had almost yielded to the mellow reign of autumn. The trees, as if sensible of its approach, had assumed
the

the saffron hue of decaying moisture, and were already clad in their yellow livery:—the corn-fields, that encircled the forest, indicated the return of the harvest; while their ripe and bending ears were blaming the delay of the reaper:—the vines too could scarcely support their mature and weighty clusters.

“Pray, Ladies,” said the captain, as he offered them some fruit, which he had brought with him from Sir Richard’s, judging it might not be altogether unacceptable, after roving through the intricate mazes of the forest, “did you observe, on our walk, how strongly the trees indicated, on all sides, the approaching return of autumn?—How pleasing is the change of the revolving seasons! In this single instance, the world’s great Architect
seems

seems to have highly designed the happiness of his creatures!"

"Undoubtedly," said Charlotte, "he has opened infinite sources of delight, not only from objects that are familiar:—they spring from others also, which would lie hidden and concealed, were it not for the curious and penetrating eye of the naturalist. Such are the admirable disposition of the several organs of sense, and those various colours of the flower garden, whose softening shades so highly excel the finest touches of the pencil.— Yet, methinks, could we ever have enjoyed an uninterrupted vernal mildness, it would have been superior to a change of seasons."

"I think so too," added Augusta; "in *my* opinion it had been far preferable."

“ Indeed ! ” replied Stanley, — “ I must beg leave to dissent. — Nature, by continually adorning herself with different habits, presents us with a variety of scenes, whose succession affords a pleasing novelty. — What think *you*, Miss Belville ? ” added he, turning round to our heroine.

“ Why, truly, ” answered Maria, smiling as she bowed, “ I must own, that I seem inclined to favour Captain Stanley’s sentiments. — A dull and gloomy day serves to enhance the pleasures of the fair weather that generally succeeds ; nor should we be sensible of Health’s invaluable blessing, were we never to be indisposed. We do not always prefer the same path : — sometimes we are pleased with a wild and rude scene — at others, we love to listen to the bleating of the flocks, or the distant lowings of the herd.

herd. So through the stormy season of winter we anticipate the return of spring; whose joys would be flat and insipid, were they durable and never-fading; they would then become tasteless; and we perhaps should be insensible to that, which now——

“Hold! my dear Maria,” interrupted Charlotte: “we cannot suppose that our first parents, while in a state of supreme bliss, were insensible to the charms of an eternal spring, as they would then have been deprived of a chief fountain of happiness.—— O happy state of Paradise!——How beautifully does Thomson lament the fatal difference, on comparing the present day with the first ages of mankind.

"The seasons since, have, with severer sway,
Oppressed a broken world:—the winter keen,
Shook forth his waste of snows; and summer shot
His pestilential heats. Great spring, before,
Green'd all the year,"—

"True, Charlotte," rejoined Stanley: "but have we that purity of mind which shone forth in our common parents? Are not the best of their offspring by many degrees inferior? Alas! we become fatiated by the enjoyment of those very pleasures, that before, perhaps, we too ardently desired; and, deprived of which, the mind was restless and unsatisfied!—so little is man sensible of the goodness of his Creator; and so small a value does he set on present blessings!"

"Nay, Stanley," said Charlotte; "had man never known the *possibility* of a change, he might, perhaps, never

ver have wished it; but *now* that he has fatally proved it——how shocking is it to hear a needy, ragged, miserable object complaining of the bitter, piercing cold——while another, in greater wretchedness, sinks down, and perishes,——a victim to the deep and faithless snow!”

“In such a case,” replied Stanley, “I grant we should be entirely devoid of humanity, not to forego the pleasures of vicissitude to avert its necessary evils.”

“O captain,” says Augusta, “you are foiled at last.——You must now yield up the palm of victory——*en vérité, Monsieur,*” added she, exultingly, and tapping him on the shoulder with her fan——“*vous êtes vaincu!*”

F 3

“Pardonnez

"*Pardonnez moi, Mademoiselle,*" returned Stanley, in a pleasant manner; "I must not so easily surrender.—Your sister has mistaken my meaning.—I gave, indeed, the preference to a change of seasons; but I intended it to be understood in a qualified sense. When our great ancestor forfeited the Divine favour, the face of nature was altered by its Creator, and, (if I may be allowed to quote, in imitation of my fair opponent)

"The sun
Had first his precept so to move, so shine,
As might affect the earth with cold and heat,
Scarce tolerable; and from the north to call
Decrepid winter; from the south to bring
Solstitial summer's heat,"

"But though his justice determined to punish thus the world, his mercy transformed the curse into a blessing.—He directed, that the
change,

change, though bitter to the individual, should withal be pleasing to the species, that it might appear as the act of ingratitude to repine at the alteration. I dare say," said he, appealing to Miss Belville, "this lady will honour me so far, as to confess herself of the same opinion."

Maria had scarcely assented ere they perceived that a storm was hastily approaching—a dense and lowering cloud, surcharged with nitre, was brooding over the grove; and sullen was the sound that ran through the forest leaves, while the stream flowed with a hoarser murmur, and portended the sudden rain. The feathered songsters, susceptible of its fall, were skimming their low flight along the ground, and sought a secure covert.

The disputants, though differing before, had now but one common aim in view. They hastened to the mansion, where they were arrived but a few moments before an impetuous torrent burst from the teeming atmosphere, and dimmed the joyless scene. The caves resounded with the hollow wind—the deep and awful voice of heaven reverberated from the distant hills; and the vivid flashes of lightning, that darted in rapid succession, served but to discover (as they illuminated the gloom) the disgraceful fall of many a sturdy, venerable oak, that, after it had mocked the fury of the elements, and resolutely maintained its ground for ages, was at last compelled to yield to the violence of the tempest.

The rain, that poured in large quantities, added greatly to the stream
which

which flowed at the foot of the grotto, where the late conversation had taken place; and, as the path which led them back to the house lay by the side of the water, Maria, in her hurry to avoid the threatening storm, accidentally dropped her pocket book on the shelving bank, from whence it glided into the stream. She now sought for it in vain; and concluding that it must have been lost on her return, it gave her great uneasiness, for it was a gift of her father's, and had long been preserved with the greatest caution. But another reflection still aggravated her misfortune; for she had stolen the opportunity, though seemingly indifferent, while Stanley was engaged in the dispute, of sketching the *contour* of his likeness, in which she had so happily succeeded as to effect a just resemblance. She had accurately traced each lineament of his

countenance, which his interest in the conversation had more strongly defined; she would else, perhaps, have borne a more active part in their dispute, as she embraced every occasion of adding to her stock of knowledge.

As she was ruminating on the accident, she perceived that the clouds were scattered, and had discharged their burden—that a calm stillness was succeeding to the storms, while the ethereal bow extended its peaceful arch over the serene heaven; and nature, cheered and refreshed, was sensible of the change on every side. Again the tenants of the wood were tuning their little throats, as if preparing a mutual congratulation.

At length she determined to trace back the path, and endeavour, if possible, to find it—but her hopes were frus-

frustrated !——After a fruitless search, she was forced to return home, chagrined and disappointed ; supposing it must have fallen into that part of the stream which joined the grot as she was putting it hastily into her pocket.

Stanley heard her mentioning the unfortunate circumstance, as she was describing it to her favourite and sympathizing Charlotte.——He delayed not a moment——he flew with wild speed to the place——he determined to recover the kind gift of a man whom he could regard with no other eye than that of filial affection.

He soon reached the grotto ; and having examined every part of the bank where the high grass might conceal the object of his search, but unable to find it, he went directly to the

water, and, leaning on the bank, thought he discovered something glittering like the clasp of a pocket-book, within a few feet of the margin—no more—he plunges in, and in a moment sinks several feet deep in the soft mud which lay at the bottom.

He was by this time much beyond his depth, and, with all his efforts to extricate himself from his dangerous situation, stuck fast till his strength was nearly exhausted.

At length having, with extreme difficulty, freed himself, he was yet unable to gain the shore, and floated a breathless carcase on the surface of the water, when, fortunately, one of the woodmen, who had been at work in the forest, and was returning from his evening toil, as he passed within a few yards of the stream, hearing a violent splash.

splashing of the water, came to the spot just in time to drag him out, and snatch him from an untimely fate.

He carried him instantly to the first shelter, which was a little hut in the middle of the wood; where meeting with some of his companions, who had not yet retired from their labour, he procured immediate assistance, and conveyed him to the house.

The news soon reached the family, and a confused murmur, which ran among the domestics that a person was just drowned in the stream which wound through the wood, caught the ear of Charlotte; from whom it was no sooner disclosed to the family than the corse was brought into the hall by the forester and some strangers, who had assisted in the melancholy office.

Sir

Sir Richard, who was in the adjoining saloon, heard the busy stir, and immediately hastened into the hall to see what assistance the exigency of the case might require :——but what was his surprize !——what his consternation !——on perceiving that the unhappy victim was no other than Stanley. A chill horror ran through all his veins——he was motionless for several minutes ; but recollecting himself, he had the presence of mind to direct his servants that, as possibly the affair might not yet have reached her ears, they should hide it from Lady Cleveland ; fearing lest a discovery of her nephew's disaster might be attended with serious and perhaps fatal consequences.

He then secured the pocket-book, that was brought him by one of the woodmen, who informed his lord that
it

it was found clenched in the gentleman's hand when he was taken out of the water. Sir Richard had scarcely recognized it, when he had the satisfaction to perceive some signs of returning life, after the attendants had been employed in chafing the body with salt before a large fire, &c. ; and as they had procured the nearest medical assistance, the surgeon soon arrived, who declared his approbation of their proceedings, and ordered him to be put into a warm bed.

In the mean time Maria had retired to her room to read an interesting pathetic story, and was now sympathizing with the unhappy sufferers, while the crystal tear furcharged the sluices of her eye, when Lady Cleveland's waiting-woman ran hastily into her apartment, and interrupted her with the following account :——

“ La !

“ La ! Miss Belville ;—what ha’nt you heard the dreadful accident which has just happened in our family ? ”

“ What accident, Lucy ? — speak quickly,” cried Maria, starting from her seat, and advancing with trembling steps towards her—“ What accident ? ”

“ Lord, ma’am, I can hardly tell ye of it, ’tis so shocking !—Why, the young captain [Here Maria’s face was instantly suffused with a deep crimson, which suddenly gave place to a deadly paleness] ; poor Mr. Stanley, ma’am, has just been brought home drowned, and there is no chance of his ever opening those sweet eyes again.”

“ Good God,” exclaimed Maria, “ what do you tell me ! ”

“ Ah !

6 113
"Ah! ma'am," continues she, "he was, to be sure, as fine a gentleman as you should see in a hundred; and so good-natured, and so kind—'tis a pity he should be taken from us so soon!"

Maria heard not the last sentence; but, tottering a few paces backward, fell lifeless into a chair. The alarmed servant, calling aloud for help, ran to inform Charlotte of what had happened, as well as to entreat her aid.

Her young mistress, who had been so recently affrighted by Captain Stanley's disaster, was but little able to afford a friendly relief to the fainting Maria. However, by endeavouring to support her spirits, and uniting her attentions with those of the domestic, she was in a short time enabled to revive her beloved friend, who cast a
dim

dim and languishing eye on the affectionate Charlotte, that, though scarcely sensible, appeared full of gratitude.

"Does he yet live?" said she, with a faltering accent, and a tongue that could scarcely articulate.

"Yes," answered Charlotte in a soothing tone, though greatly affected at the scene—"My cousin indeed survives. For heaven's sake, my dearest Maria, be comforted—have pity on your Charlotte—she cannot bear to see you so afflicted."

Miss Belville now burst into tears, which afforded her a temporary relief. Her amiable friend advised her to repose herself on the pillow, and endeavour to calm her troubled spirits.

She

She then dismissed Lucy, (who had been particularly officious and attentive on Maria, as she silently reprimanded herself for her thoughtless conduct in so abruptly informing her of the misfortune) and soon after left the room herself, lest she might hinder a gentle slumber from refreshing those eyelids that were too much reddened and disordered by their late effusion.

It was then Maria recollected her enquiry after the captain's safety, which returning sense had involuntarily uttered; and she blushed, though alone, at the remembrance. She feared she had disclosed too much of the sentiments of her heart, and almost reproached herself with having made an open and manifest declaration of her attachment. She feared lest her inadvertence should have kindled

dled some suspicion in the breasts of Charlotte and her attendant.

The former she knew would not make known her weakness, and had cherished too delicate and tender a friendship for her to mention it to any one, without previous leave on her own side. She knew that Charlotte would rather blame her for not dividing with her the secret; but she feared lest her heart was betrayed to Lucy, who had seen her first agitations;—a fear that was but too justly founded—for Lucy had already published it in the kitchen—the report spread among the servants, who found out something very extraordinary in the similar circumstances of the lovers—that ~~one~~ should have endangered his life to regain the property of the ~~other~~—while

the

the other was fainting at the information of his distress.

"And was it, indeed, *her* pocket-book," said Lucy, feelingly. "La! if they'd both happen'd to have died, what a dismal story it would have made!——just like——like——la! la! how I forgets people's names!"

She then returned to Maria, to see if she could render her any further service. She entered the room softly, fearful of disturbing her; but, perceiving she was awake, enquired "if she found herself better?" and "whether she had been to sleep?"

"No, child," answered Maria, and offering her a crown;——"there is a trifling recompense for the trouble I have already given you." Observing that Lucy hesitated to receive it, she added,

added,—“ Perhaps it is not enough—
I am sorry I have offered you so little
—I know it falls short of the reward
that you have a right to expect.”

The servant, affected by her generosity, could not forbear falling on her knees, and confessing “ that she did not deserve a farthing, for having frightened such a dear, sweet, young lady. I’m sure, ma’am,” added she, “ I’m very sorry that I should have mentioned any thing about Captain Stanley—but indeed, ma’am, by this time he’s surprizingly recovered;—and he did so dart his eyes to his hands, as soon as ever he opened them, for all the world, ma’am, as if he’d but just been awaken’d from a dream, and asked what was become of the pocket-book ?”

“ What

"What do you say, Lucy?" interrupted Maria, with the utmost impatience, dropping the money, while she could scarcely summon fortitude sufficient to preserve herself from relapsing into her former situation.

"'Twas found, ma'am, clenched in his hand, as he was taken up before the grotto."

Maria had heard enough—her heart was too full entirely to conceal its emotion—she heaved a deep sigh—and signifying that she had no further occasion for Lucy's attendance, insisted on her receiving half-a-guinea, as a reward for her late attention, and desired to be left to her own reflections.

"Unfortunate Maria," said she to herself, "this does but add fuel to the flame that you have long been endeavour-

deavouring to stifle.—O Stanley! amiable as thou art! to concern thyself so much in such a trifling loss of an unthinking, careless girl! Why did I not in silence regret the accident? But, alas! I fear it was thine image, which I flattered myself I had exactly copied, that served to aggravate the loss; more, perhaps, than the reflection that it was the long-preserved gift of my respected father. If so, I must dissemble. He may entertain a mutual attachment, as I am sometimes led to imagine from his polite attentions; and at others, regard as the effects of his generous disposition, and gratitude towards my parent. But I will not seek to increase it: he deserves one of superior affluence, by which he may be enabled to follow the generous bent of his inclinations, nor feel those disagreeable restraints, that

that he otherwise must, through a scanty income."

The dinner bell now summoned her attendance. She would rather that they had dispensed with her company: however, assuming an air of indifference, she entered the parlour, where Sir Richard and his daughters were already seating themselves. The former restored her the pocket-book, which necessarily introduced an enquiry after the captain's welfare.

"He is not dead, Miss Belville:—pray don't alarm yourself," answered Augusta, with a sneer.

Maria could scarcely suppress an half-rising blush, which was partly occasioned by a fear that she suspected her real sentiments, and partly by an indignant disgust of her unkind im-

pertinence: but Charlotte no sooner perceived it, than, with her usual tenderness and good-nature, she started a foreign subject.

In a few days Maria was enabled to make a suitable acknowledgment, as she had taken the first opportunity after his recovery; and Lady Cleveland was informed of the whole adventure, to which she had as yet been kept a stranger, by Sir Richard's orders, because she had been confined to her room at the time of the accident.

CHAP. VIII.

DESCRIPTION OF CLEVELAND FOREST---AN
UNEXPECTED VISITOR ARRIVES AT THE VI-
CARAGE.

"Scenes of my youth, whose ev'ry sport could
please."

Goldsmith.

THE time now approached when Maria was to return, according to her promise, to the Vicarage; and Stanley, whose determination it had long been to pay his earliest respects to its worthy inhabitant after his return to England, mentioned his intention to the family one morning, as they sat at breakfast. It was therefore proposed that he should accom-
pany

pany Maria, who would go on horse-back, and be attended by one of Sir Richard's servants.

Maria received the proposal with an easy politeness; and said, how glad her father would be to see Mr. Stanley; while the pleasure which sparkled in her eyes indicated that it was not her father only who would be gratified with his company.

The morning which had been fixed on for their departure arrived; and Maria, after taking an affectionate leave of Charlotte, and the rest of the family; and the captain having given his promise (which was extorted by Lady Cleveland and his cousins, who were now become exceedingly fond of his company) to return within a week; mounted their horses, and rode slowly from the park-gate.

It

It was now near the middle of September, and one of those serene and beautiful mornings, which in that season of the year is so happily tempered, as neither to relax by excessive heat, nor chill with an unkindly blast.——

The sun now shone with softened lustre, and shed his sweetest beams.

A great part of their road lay thro' the forest, lined on each side with trees of tallest growth, whose fading foliage presented to the eye a variety of shades, each of which lost itself in another of deeper hue.

The frequent vistas which opened on the view, and ran through a long length of verdure, served to relieve the dulness of the road, which sometimes extended at least two miles before them, in a straight line, without

an object to excite the attention, except the rows of trees on either side. Sometimes, indeed, the road would suddenly make an angle from the most inclosed part, and discover through an opening glade, which terminated the wood on that extremity, a distant prospect of the sea, and the blue sides of an adjacent island. A few scattered deer, who were grazing at leisure in the more open and luxuriant pastures, or ruminating in the shadier coverts of the forest, gave animation to the scene, and completed the picturesque appearance.

Maria and her companion moved slowly through this wilderness of sweets, determined to enjoy it in full luxury, and deceiving the time by the charms of an elegant and lively conversation, which was inspired by the beautiful scenery around them, and
carried

carried on with spirit by both parties. The attraction was mutual and equal. Lost in endeavours to delight, and be delighted, they were both unconscious of the secret influence which insensibly insinuated itself into the heart, and served to fan a flame, which each had resolved to stifle, and to add fresh poison to the wounds they had already incurred.

The look of sympathy—the self-same with Beam'd from each eye, and glow'd upon each cheek.

No incident worth mentioning happened in their ride, which brought them, by the hour of dinner, to the Vicarage, where they were met at the wicket by the worthy Vicar; who, having tenderly embraced his daughter, who flew eagerly into his arms, turned to welcome the stranger to his hospitable mansion.

The long absence of Stanley had made a considerable alteration in his appearance: the varying bloom of youth had mellowed into the more settled aspect of confirmed manhood; and the feminine softness of his complexion, when a boy, had been tintured with a shade of brown from Asiatic suns.

The Vicar did not recollect him; and Maria and Stanley having for a few moments enjoyed his hesitation and embarrassment, on the latter's addressing him with an air of respectful familiarity, at length announced the well-known name to his astonished ears.

"My son—my dear Stanley," exclaimed the Vicar in an extasy of joy, at the same time clasping his right hand

hand between both his own,—“ how sincerely rejoiced I am to see you !”

Stanley received his kind, paternal salutation, with an equal but more respectful warmth; and when the first congratulations were over, he related the particulars of his voyage.

They sat down to a small but cheerful repast; and the remainder of the day was spent in that convivial and animated intercourse which ever flows from expanded hearts united in the bonds of friendship and congenial sentiment.

The Vicar saw with pleasure the harvest of those virtues, which it had been his delight to cultivate in early childhood; and while he secretly congratulated himself as the sower, he could not but admire the goodness

of the soil which produced so plentiful a crop.

The next day was passed in visiting those parts of the neighbourhood, which were chiefly interesting to Stanley, from the recollection of past scenes. Every hill and valley that had resounded with his youthful echo—every field that had been witness to his innocent gambols—and every cottage that had heard his infant prattle, was resorted to, and minutely traced, with an avidity that testified the peculiar pleasure which he received from the remembrance.

There was a grove of stately elms, which lay between the Vicarage and the house he had formerly lived in with his beloved parent, which was particularly endeared to him—as it was the spot in which he had first seen
the

the charming object that now reigned solely in his thoughts, and the scene of their rural pastimes and diversions.

During the few days he staid in the village, this was his favourite walk, and the chief subject of his contemplation; as he would sometimes steal here unperceived, when the company at the Vicarage were engaged, to indulge his meditations, and resign himself to the pleasing melancholy that upon this occasion always overspread his mind.

At one end of the grove, on a seat which had been placed there by the Vicar, (for he was fond of smoaking a pipe there in a summer evening—and Maria would often take a book and read there) he scribbled the following Sonnet with his pencil.

SONNET.

Dear H.....! when I behold thy scenes again,
 Thy flow'ry meadows, and re-echoing hills,
 That lift their green heads high above the main,
 What secret transport in my bosom thrills!
 And as I trace each dear, delightful spot,
 Where, wild in youth, I gave a loose to play,
 (With every pain and every care forgot)
 And gave to cheerfulness the livelong day.—
 Such soften'd sorrow plays around my heart,
 As warns me of the liquid lapse of life;
 Of former friends long lost, from whom to part
 Was death; and joys, that knew not envious
 strife.
 In vain, alas! thy pleasures I deplore,
 "Scenes of my youth"—that must return no more!

The day before Stanley left the Vi-
 carage, to return to Sir Richard's, he
 received a letter from his friend the
 Honourable Mr. Wentworth, request-
 ing his company in a little tour,
 which he designed to make through
 Italy and Switzerland.

As

As Wentworth was a man of sentiment and refined intellect, and would travel for the sake of improvement as well as pleasure, Stanley promised himself much satisfaction and amusement from the generous proposal, and embraced it without hesitation.

But there was another reason which operated forcibly upon his mind at this time:—his passion for Maria grew every day stronger; and the agitation of his breast from his endeavours to conceal and stifle it, became so painful, and even insupportable, while in presence of the adored object, that he resolved to tear himself from her company, to some distant spot, in the hope that absence might cure an attachment, to whose relief the utmost efforts of reason had proved ineffectual.

For

For this purpose Mr. Wentworth had enquired of his friends in power, whether there were any probability that the regiment to which Stanley belonged would be wanted for immediate service, but was answered in the negative, as it had been so recently employed in the Indies.

He was not long, therefore, in providing necessaries for his departure. He took a tender leave of Maria and the Vicar; while the latter was regretting that he should so soon lose him, after an interview which was endeared by a previous absence; and the former could not but perceive the energy with which he clasped her lovely hand, notwithstanding every endeavour to the contrary.

He returned instantly to his uncle's; from whence, after a short delay,

lay, he set off with Wentworth for Southampton, where they had heard that a vessel was stationed, waiting the reception of passengers.

CHAP. IX.

A SEA PIECE---A VOYAGE---DESCRIPTION OF A
CELL IN THE ROCKS---CERTAIN ATTACH-
MENTS NOT EASILY FORGOTTEN---CHARLES
BELVILLE LEAVES ETON FOR THE VICAR-
AGE, AND SOON AFTER VISITS CAMBRIDGE.

“Fond love no cure will have—seeks no repose—
Delights in grief, nor any measure knows.”

Phillips.

SOON after their arrival, they set
sail with a fair wind. The dash-
ing waves conspired with the freshness
of the gale, and hastily propelled the
reeling vessel. The swelling canvass
expanded to the fun, catching his
rays, that softened into varying sha-
dows. Her lofty sides rise high above

the main, whose reflection trembles over its green surface, and alternately loses itself in the snowy foam, while the towering masts unfurl their streamers, and let loose their colours to the sky. The receding coast lessens by degrees its blue and remote expanse: the strand first disappears——now *this* turret vanishes, now *that*—one height succeeds another in its fall, till the pleasing succession closes. The sailors caught the last glimpse of their native sea-girt Albion.

“ Happy island,” exclaimed Stanley, “ ere long I will revisit thy yellow sands. Though distant many a league, I still, and ever shall behold thee; for thou containest in thy bosom all that is dear to this heart—that throbs at the remembrance of her whom it has left behind, and still feels itself attracted by an involuntary impulse,

pulse, that, contrary as it were to Nature's powerful laws, instead of lessening, I know not how, increases, the further I recede from thy shores."

The ship proceeded on her voyage, and the two friends amused themselves with several books that the captain of the vessel, in whose society they felt great satisfaction, furnished them with in the cabin.

By the help of some excellent glasses they saw the fortified road and harbour of Brest, that lay to the left as they passed the Gallic coast.

The parting waves seemed glad to separate, and receive their pleasing burden, as she ploughed the bay of Biscay, where Stanley was, not unfrequently, delighted with one while beholding the beams of the full-orbed moon

moon play with a mild effulgence on the main, as he welcomed her with the softest murmurings of his flute:— and at another time, contemplating the king of day, as he rose from his watery bed, and suffused the ocean with living gold, while the distant vessels appeared as so many specks on the broad and dazzling surface.

They next steered their course by the rich and luxuriant mountains of Spain, where Nature seemed to have been so profuse and lavish, and to have scattered in such abundance her aromatic herbs, as to support her children with impunity in a careless and neglectful indolence.

Scarcely had they coasted, with successful prow, the fertile Andalusia, ere the renowned fortress of Gibraltar, on one side, summons in each British breast

breast a recollection of patriot worthies; while Abyla rears its dusky head on the opposite shores of barbarous Afric, and presents to the imagination that fabled theme of poesy, which sung the matchless strength of a deity, with nervous arm disjoining it from the ancient hill of Calpe.

A prosperous gale now wafted them over the Mediterranean, and soon the joyous pilot gained his wished-for haven.

Nor less agreeable were the sensations of Wentworth and Stanley, when they first leaped upon the shore, and again set foot on land. They gazed with admiration on the forts and citadel of Leghorn, whose ramparts commanded an extensive prospect of the sea, and a number of delightful villas, that were embosomed with shrubberies,

ries, and scattered in mazy confusion about the inland country; nor could they but admire the neatness and regulation of the edifices, that owned the taste of a modern artist, and the curious assemblage of busy strangers from all quarters of the globe.

Maria, in the mean time, who saw the departure of Stanley with regret, tried to console herself for his absence, and even to forget him, in those innocent and simple pleasures which the objects around her continually presented. She could hardly doubt that he entertained a sincere and ardent love for her, though his lips had not betrayed the emotions of his heart. When she reflected on his particular and marked attentions to her; his anxiety and dangerous enterprize to recover the trifle she had lost; and, above all, the visible concern in his looks

looks and manner when he last took leave of her—she was led strongly to imagine that a decided partiality in her favour had taken root in his breast, and that circumstances of the most cogent nature alone prevented him from disclosing it. Yet again, recollecting herself, and calling to her aid the pride of conscious dignity, which it was her duty to maintain, she considered herself sunk in her own esteem, if she should continue to cherish a tender regard for a man, who had never told her that there existed a reciprocity of affection on his part; and to plant a passion, where, according to the established laws of society and *etiquette*, it should first spontaneously spring.

He had quitted her abruptly to go to a distant country, without soliciting her prayers to conduct him safely over

over the waters, or asking her remembrance to sooth him on the way. She saw the stigma which would infallibly be affixed to her character in the world, were her weakness but suspected; and she felt the force of virtue too much to incur the reproach even of her own breast, though unknown to the world, from encouraging desires, which, if exposed to the broad face of day, would bring on her disgrace. She resolved, therefore, to make an effort to forget him, how dearly forever it might cost her.

Another while the tide of softness would recur in its full strength, and sink her most determined resolutions. She would fancy his behaviour, fraught with tenderness, so plainly bespoke a particular esteem for her, that it were folly to suspect it; and ungenerous to attempt to stifle the return which
glowed

glowed with so much ardour in her own breast. In those moments she would soothe the pleasing reflection, and indulge her sadness. She would take her lute, and walk to the sea side, which was about two miles distant from the Vicarage; and there, among the rocks, would she sit and warble to the soft breathing of the strings some plaintive and artless notes, which her melancholy had inspired.

There was, in particular, a favourite cell scooped out in the hanging cliff, apparently the work of nature, (around whose sides the sea-weed and samphire grew in scattered clusters) which was the principal witness of her sorrow—the confidant to whom she told her tale of woe. The floor was covered with shells, which the waves after a storm usually washed in; and from the roof depended drops of water

ter petrified in various shapes, which a strong imagination might convert into animals of all descriptions.

The pointed eminence of a rock, on either side, formed an entrance into the cell, to which a few steps, worn by the frequent foot of those who visited it, led by an easy ascent. The cliff towered to an amazing height above, in bold projections; and on its top frowned a thick grove of trees, whose leafy honours, though bare and scanty from the keen blast, nodded awfully over its steep and craggy brow.

In this cool retreat, which commanded an extensive view of the wide ocean, on a seat, which art seemed to have hewn out of the living rock, she would delight to sit a summer's even-
 Vol. II. H 2 ing.

ing, tuning the soft warblings of her lute, responsive to her sighs.

The mild lustre of the setting sun, which in succession soon yielded to the milder approach of evening; and the murmuring waves that flowed in undulating motion at her feet, and chafed the pebbled shore with their unwearyed course, conspired with the melody she had raised to calm the turbulence of her breast, and lull it into peace.

At other times she would stray into the neighbouring grove, beneath the trembling moon-beam, and invoke the bird of night to answer woes with *her*.

—The passion had sunk too deep to be eradicated, and baffled all her efforts. She yielded not to its influence without struggling to disengage herself; but, like a *lured* bird, the more she

she struggled to get free, the more she seemed involved.

Nothing appeared so likely to conquer this fatal attachment as a constant succession of employment, since it would most probably withdraw her thoughts from dwelling on a subject, which, though it brought pleasure, came never unalloyed with pain. She therefore enlarged the sphere of her amusements :——to those of painting and drawing, which she already practised, she now applied herself to the study of botany ;——she arranged her flowers according to their different tribes ; divided them into classes, and distinguished their numerous species. She would pass whole mornings in examining their growth, raising their drooping heads, and supporting their tender stalks.

In those simple and domestic amusements she would contrive to lose, for a time, the natural bent of her thoughts (which were ever prone to muse on the same subject) and to elude the image which continually haunted her.

The return of her brother from Eton about this time (which was the second visit he had made to the Vicarage, during an absence of three years, and the last he was to make before he went to Cambridge) contributed, in a great measure, to restore the tranquillity of her mind. The strong, animal spirits, and volatile cheerfulness of Charles, would not only dispel the sadness of Maria, but often shake the Vicar's sides with paroxysms of laughter, at the relation of some droll anecdote, or ludicrous adventure. He
knew

knew that a *good story* well embellished, or a jest pointed with humour, would soften the features of his father into a smile, who was so far from checking innocent mirth, that he himself delighted to promote it.

But now no more must charm his ear "the pun ambiguous or conundrum quaint."——The day arrived when Charles was to leave the peaceful habitation of his father, for the more busy scenes of *alma mater*.

The good Vicar, still anxious for the welfare of his son, could not help striking again that string which he had touched before.

He therefore repeated the substance of his former advice; and wishing him farewell——at the same time

H 3

empha-

emphatically pronouncing the word
 "Remember"—he suffered the car-
 riage to depart, attended by his pray-
 ers and wishes.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

WINTER----LADY CLEVELAND VISITS THE VICARAGE----A COTTAGE SCENE---THE HEROINE ARRIVES AT GROSVENOR SQUARE.

"The lively twitter of the groves, and the murmur of the brooks, yield a more delicious pleasure to the ear than the music of the Opera, or the compositions of the ablest masters. The eye reposes more agreeably on the concave firmament, on an expanse of waters, on mountains covered with rocks, than it does at balls, assemblies, and *petits soupers*."

Zimmerman.

THE Clevelands sincerely regretted the departure of their amiable visitors:—Augusta, indeed, was the only exception; she might rather be said to have secretly rejoiced that Maria had returned to H.....; as she

then lost sight of an object, towards which she had conceived so irreconcilable an aversion, though every day served but to confirm her in ideas of its innate excellence.

Ever envious of attentions shewn to Maria, she had observed the polite assiduity and behaviour of her cousin, which she attributed to a meanness of spirit, that derogated from the honour of his family; and would often chide her sister for contracting an intimacy with one who was so much her inferior, and partaking with her in amusements.

She would frequently remark, that the time might have been employed to much greater advantage, if the same steps that she had trodden were pursued by Charlotte; who, on the other hand, was sometimes so piqued at her

teaz-

teazing speeches, that she would represent the unlucky difference in their dispositions——blame her for her reserved and inactive stateliness——and ask, if she were to be forbidden exchanging assurances of *that* friendship with another, which she was hindered from partaking with a self-conceited sister.

Augusta had pleased herself, however, with the reflection that Stanley's absence in a foreign clime might serve to eradicate a passion which she had discovered.——So different were the sentiments of Miss Cleveland to those of her mother, who was always anxious for Miss Belville's company.

Charlotte, too, found that her embroidery was void of amusement, without her friend to share in the grateful task. She sought in vain to divert

herself at the harpsichord—it did but recal to her memory the duets that she played with her favourite Maria. She never retired to her closet but she seemed, as it were, robbed of her better half; and as often as she turned her eyes (she knew not why) to the grey mountains, over which the road rose that led to the Vicarage—the cheerless face of Nature afforded no alleviation to the regret she experienced for the absence of her friend.—Several seasons, indeed, had not been able to obliterate the remembrance of her sweet society; but her want of Maria was always increased when the gloom of winter obscured the prospect.

The sun now darted at intervals his faint, and sloping rays—the storms chased each other in the vapoury sky—now drove the pattering hail, or
humid

humid fleet—the joyless flocks, with melancholy step, were wandering over the grounds that encircled the forest—some of which had been recently ploughed, while others appeared as a brown, damp, moorish waste—or the cattle were lowing in their stalls, while the tempest beat from without on the shattered and crazy shelter :——the lesser tenants of the wood sought their scanty fare on comfortless wing ; while the hoarse rooks sped their airy flight over the scene in many a sable cloud :——the dreary trees were stripped of their foliage, and the bleak winds howled through the wood, resounding in the hollow caves, that were answered by the sullen murmurings of the brook, whose dank flags whistled in unison ;——or perhaps the branches of the forest trees were loaded with the fleecy snow ; while the narrow pools, which were formed in various parts by

the inequality of the woodland, were congealed by the firm ice; till yielding it glitters to the sun, and at length dissolves its melted surface.

Winter was so far advanced, when Lady Cleveland determined to visit the metropolis; and, to the mortification of her eldest daughter, and the joy of her youngest, she designed to entreat the Vicar to let Maria accompany them.

To ensure, if possible, a compliance with her request, she ordered her equipage one morning early, some time before their intended journey, to wait on the old gentleman in person. She carried with her a collection of the British poets, elegantly bound, that she was commissioned to present to Mr. Belville in Sir Richard's name; and some curious exotics, that Char-

lotte had chosen out of her hot-house, knowing he was fond of botany, as a testimony of her respect; for she had been pleased with his agreeable manners, when she attended her mother at her last request, after celebrating the majority of the Earl of Fermor.

He received her with all the warmth of purest and most genuine friendship.

Lady Cleveland pleaded her cause with such artless affability and good nature, that the Vicar pleasantly declared he could not but yield to her solicitations, and she took an opportunity, while Maria left the room, of commending her manners to her father, and informing him how much she was beloved by the family.

They passed a happy day, till the shades of evening warned her ladyship to return.

Mr.

Mr. Belville, though on the declining verge of life, was yet a stranger to that moroseness which partakes not of youthful *repartée*. He begged a return of compliments to Miss Charlotte, and thanked her for the valuable exotics; but remarked "how judiciously she had acted, in not bringing them herself, as he could not have been so captivated with their beauty, when eclipsed by a livelier and more enchanting flower."

Maria did not suffer her to leave the Vicarage till she had obtained permission to bring with her Fanny, the daughter of Lord Fermor's bailiff, as an attendant.

The next evening she hastened to the cottage, rejoicing to convey the pleasing news, as a lucid star shoots athwart the azure. She entered the cottage garden

garden with a smile, that spoke the placid benignity of her mind. The family were regaling themselves around a chearful and blazing fire—and ere she had half crossed the court, that was enclosed by some rude and broken pales, the children (a brother and sister of Fanny's) ran out to meet her, and pressed either hand with frequent kisses. She was charmed with the content that smiled beneath their humble tufted roof, and recked not the dark and gelid air without.

The father had been perusing the sacred and instructive page with his beloved and attentive offspring, while the aged partner of his days was yet exerting her feeble strength at a decent spinning-wheel, by the side of a warm hearth. Some china ware was arranged in glittering order on the shelf, before the pewter plates, that owned a
clean

clean, fair polish ;—a venerable clock, that had an air of fallen majesty, served to remind them of the fleeting hours ;—and a fitch of bacon, that had been prepared by the smoaky faggot, was supported by a wooden rack, that depended from the cieling, while another was hanging in the chimney corner, as if provident of the future.

How eagerly did Fanny embrace Miss Belville's proposal ! It served, in a great measure, to dispel a nervous fever, that had been preying for some time on her tender frame ; and a change of scene was thought capable of completing her recovery.

The Vicar, who had allotted a part of his youth to the study of medicine, in which respect he had been very servicable to his parishioners, would constantly order Maria to furnish her
with

with necessary articles; and the secret, innocent satisfaction that she experienced in such commissions, might perhaps, without profanation, be compared to a modification of those pure and refined joys that the blessed spirits feel when charged with some gracious behest of Omnipotence.

Fanny was now able to leave her room, attend to her favourite poultry, and join the happy circle of her friends in the cottage. She had never seen the capital, but she had often thought of it, and with an aching heart, lest Florival (for so was the earl's valet called) might transfer his affections from the simple Fanny to some gay and flirting *inamorata*.

Maria, though the Vicar had so readily complied, yet thought he had put a restraint on his inclinations, till
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he assured her to the contrary——declaring his wish that she should see London; and bidding her, while she partook of its diversions, to beware, lest they should engross her attention. He soon after bade her a hearty farewell, as she set off with Fanny for Cleveland House——from whence she proceeded to the metropolis with the family in their coach and four, while Fanny attended the domestics, who followed in another conveyance. After a journey of two days, in which they were favoured with fair weather, they arrived at Sir Richard's elegant mansion in Grosvenor Square.

Every object that she now saw was so different from the rural scenes she had just quitted, that it afforded a wide scope for interesting contemplation. The confused bustle of the streets formed a pleasing contrast with
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the retired peacefulness of H.....:— she could not but observe the various sounds, that pierced the air, of carriages, pedlars, &c. so much unlike that silence which was wont to reign around her, and was only disturbed by the warblings of the feathered choir.

The several amusements had charms in their turn. With pleasure she beheld the fantastic disposition of lamps, and the dazzling arcades of variegated lights, that presented themselves at Vauxhall.—Susceptible of the magic powers of harmony, she was delighted with the Opera to a degree of enthusiasm—and she would love to trace the peculiar beauties of the first masters at the various exhibitions of Paintings.—How is her sensibility awakened at the scenes of distress presented by the Tragic Muse!—how does

does the big tear bedew her beautiful cheek, while

“Dread o’er the scene the ghost of Hamlet stalks;
Othello rages; poor Monimia mourns;
And Belvidera pours her soul in love!”

“Illustrious Siddons!” would she exclaim, “thou mistress of the passions!—that ledest them at will by the silken threads of enchantment!—What varied elegance adorns thy frame!—attractive Graces love to play around thee, and tune thine every motion. Conscious of its great, informing principle, thy soul looks out majestic;—diffusing magic effluence, it steals upon the sense, that yields a willing captive. Each feature modifies—each gesture softens in union irresistible:—pathetic accent sinks in gentlest cadence, taught by thy perfect eloquence, mellifluous;—or bathed in tears of filial tenderness,
Euphra-

Euphrasia's eye darts through its pearly veil a milder radiance;—or Isabella moans, in piteous sorrow, her hapless—conjugal affection:—dies her pale cheek—bursts her entended heart:—Charms succeed to charms, that one while beam collected splendour, at another shrink into themselves—as light and shade alternate captivate beneath the creative pencil.”

Thus, by partaking of diversions, and mixing in gay parties of pleasure, or visiting with the Clevelands, Miss Belville was totally engaged.

But though (from a natural curiosity, that seeks to familiarize objects, which, antecedent to a knowledge of their existence, were strange and irrelative to our natures) she was for a while entertained with moving in so high a sphere; yet, not unfrequently,

was

was she disgusted with the fastidious *bauteur*, which was but too apparent under all the specious gloss of pomp and magnificence.

Among their splendid acquaintance Lord Fermor was of the number that mostly frequented the house. He was not long returned from Ireland, whither he had gone in order to reconcile the claims respecting part of his estate—where, that they might avoid the necessary fatigues of law, they agreed, after advising with some able counsel, to abide by the decision of appointed mediators, who had not hesitated to declare, that the present possessor retained it by illegal measures.

Absence and private concerns had almost obliterated his regards for Maria; and he had no sooner sustained such a loss of fortune, than he became
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the more determined to retrieve his circumstances by some affluent marriage, to which he considered his title as a powerful introduction. But when he saw once more the lovely object, again he sighed for the possession. This brought him so frequently to Grosvenor Square; where, to favour his dishonourable intentions, he omitted no opportunity to fan the flame of that vanity, of which he fancied Miss Belville was possessed. She, on the contrary, would ridicule his freedom, and was secretly despising his impertinence; nor could she experience a more unwelcome sound than the rattling approach of his lordship's phaeton—when she would often steal to her room, to avoid the unpleasant interview.

At length, she remarked to Charlotte, who noticed her absence, that
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the earl's behaviour was very disgusting; who, with her usual sprightliness, smiled at Miss Belville's timidity, and advised her always to confront him;—"for innocence," said she, "will ever be superior to base and designing artifice :"—while Augusta, who had not been behind hand in observing the attentions of the earl, (which she ascribed to her amazing sagacity) and knew that the pride of his family would not suffer him to entertain an idea of a connection, could not help feeling an ill-natured pleasure in Maria's evident embarrassment; and, purposely to mortify her, would ask—"if she did not think Lord Fermor was an affable, polite, and very agreeable companion?"

The *nonchalance* and *sang froid* which distinguished the manners of the world in which she was now engaged, added

added to the petulant behaviour of Augusta, much displeased the sincerity of Maria: and the attentions of his lordship, which now became exceedingly teasing and offensive, made her often withdraw, on pretence of indisposition, and muse in silence over the image of an object, whom, when compared with the rest of mankind, she thought scarce of earthly mould:—and “ Oh !” she cried, still fondly gazing on his face, which seemed to beam fresh beauties as she gazed, “ faint image of thy bright original ! wherever he wanders from his native soil ;—whether through a wild and trackless desert, untrod before by human feet, or through a rich and fertile climate, warmed by more propitious suns——still shall my mind pursue with eager eye his lovely form, and trace with fond remembrance his endearing aspect.—Ah ! never, Stan-

ley, can I forget thee——insensible though thou art to my sincere regard, and the quick throbbings of a faithful breast. Still, as thou goest, may heaven protect thee, and pour on thy head its choicest blessings !”

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

A MASQUERADE---AN ADVENTURE OF A DANGEROUS COMPLEXION.

“What chance, good lady, hath bereft you thus?”

Milton.

THERE was yet one species of entertainment which Maria had never seen, and naturally anticipating pleasure from novelty, she was easily prevailed on to take a ticket for a masquerade.

Lord Fermor, Sir James Naresby, and Charles Belville, who had come from Cambridge to meet his sister in town, were to be of the party.

It was a late hour in the evening before they entered this temple of festivity, which was adorned with every art to please the fancy, or warm the imagination. Elegance and pomp, taste and magnificence, here found an union. Invention appeared racked, and wealth exhausted, in giving beauty and splendor to the diversion of an evening.

The piazzas leading to the grand saloon were of crystal, glittering with variegated lustre. A collonade of beautiful architecture was seen on either side. The roof was coloured by a Titian's glowing brush:—it represented the departure of Briseis from Achilles' tent.—Here was the god-like hero weeping with rage, and mad with ungovernable ire:—there Patrocles offering vain solace:—here stood the black-eyed maid, led by the envoys

voys of the Grecian king :—there the bold myrmidons, filled with disappointed fury at their lord's disgrace—and the wide sea clashing on the rocky shore. The saloon was hung with tapestry of choicest workmanship, which pourtrayed the labours of Hercules. In the centre was a fountain of Arabian scent, continually supplied by a white-robed nymph.

The ball room was at once magnificent and neat :—it was decorated with embroidered silk, and shone with lamps of every hue. Other spacious apartments were opened to receive the mystic multitude, all variously superb, and glittering with ornament.

Among the many elegant figures, which formed the group, Lady Caroline C—— shone with superior grace. —With that peculiar taste, which

surpasses imitation, she had selected an attire suited to the elegance of her form, which added the decorations of art to her unrivalled natural perfection.

She entered the room with a Parisian *Poissarde*, whose filth and impudence were an advantageous mirror for the divine Caroline.—All that is shocking to humanity, or disgusting to the circles of politeness, was centered in this fiend of deformity. On her pike, of unusual length, she bore a human heart, which frequently she licked with savage ferocity, glutting her thirst with the blood of murdered infants. This child of darkness, with a ruddy face lighted by intemperance, bore an Olympus on her party-coloured back, and with unwieldy dance laboured to shew the peculiar gift of Nature.

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The arrival of the Dutchess of R—— was announced—not by the rude voice of a plebeian, but—by that awful silence, which instantly commenced.

Those who were engaged in buffoonery, or the mingled circle—in converse, or the dance—had no sooner directed their eyes towards this beautiful form, than they were arrested in the midst of their ardour. As she approached the decrepit sensualist—the fragrance of her breath, more delicious than the Indian bower—those eyes, which at every glance shot arrows to the soul—her voice, more harmonious than the strains of Philomel—her attitude, more graceful than the Queen of Day, when, escorted by the dawning hours, she climbs the morning clift;—these, with every other soft perfection that beautify the human form, rekindled in his breast

the long-extinguished flame. The youth, void of idea in her presence, divested of sensation at her approach, gazed on her with unwearied glance. —She joined in the mystic dance with Lord B——, who that night personated a Highland chief.

How seldom we behold so dignified a pair:—he like a warrior, crowned with towering crest—the more graceful than the Spartan queen. Admiring crowds beheld their easy course, and multitudes with rapture gazed on every step.

The attention of the assembly was afterwards demanded by the figure of Fortune, who, blind to the merits of her votaries, was dispensing with a lavish hand to some, while others she disdained to look upon. She guided a machine of curious workmanship, a
 slippery

slippery wheel, inaccessible to those who vainly sought the aid of her undiscerning hand. Some, by superior chance, were even now grasping at the pinnacle of Hope, till, her aid capriciously with-holden, they fall unhappy victims to the envious crowd, that seek with eagerness to mount the doubtful path, and watch with yellow eye the joyful train that are exalted by her fickle gifts.

The Dutcheſs of R—— was bold enough to try the slippery ſteep.—— Fortune, proud and haughty to the rabble crew, bowed the knee before her.—She reached the envied height; and Fortune reſigned the treaſures of her wheel to the ſucceſſful candidate.

The prizes were now differently beſtowed:——the man of letters drew a volume of valuable lore:——the miſer
I 5 claimed

claimed a purse—the philosopher a watch—the bold warrior a trumpet:—the macaroni, spruce as the month of May, was presented with a garland:—to the brilliant Lord B—— she gave a pointed dart, which, like the arrow from the unerring bow of Cephalus, flew towards the object of his wish.

The wheel, when every one had drawn his chance, contained a solitary prize, due to herself:—it was a mirror adorned with diamonds; that there she might behold those charms, which to resist, is vain—to match, impossible;—and learn to pity the dejected youth, doomed by a hapless fate to sigh in secret for a prize like her.

The multitude were now devoted to a rustic Pan, producing from unequal reeds the notes of melody. He led a
 nume-

numerous train of actors multiform,
 the children of the woods:—some,
 decked with laurel, sung to the music
 of his pipe;—others, enraptured with
 the song, danced around the god, and
 by the tuneful echoes of their feet in-
 creased the harmony divine. In his
 train was the antique Silenus, who,
 crowned with pine and evergreen, dis-
 pensed hilarity to all his followers.—
 The God of Mirth, he drove before
 him Spleen and Melancholy:—these,
 unable to resist his shafts of satire, fled
 to the gloomy shrine of Meditation,
 and dared no more intrude on the fe-
 licity of the rural song.

A ballad-finger, with harmonious
 voice, mingled in the crowd.—She
 spoke of battle, and the love-sick
 swain—of shepherds, and the pastoral
 life—and now she sung—

THE WOES OF ELLA.

YE happy children of Delight

Attend to Ella's song:

The flinty rock would melt to tears

To hear poor Ella's wrong!

A maid possess'd of every charm

That nature boasts, or art;

An easy conquest she subu'd

The fond De Courcy's heart.

With false, insinuating tale

He smote her tender breast:—

Fell—faithless fiend!—Adieu to peace—

Adieu to Ella's rest.

With passions feign'd, but soothing voice,

De Courcy won her love:—

The prize obtain'd—no other joys

The monster wish'd to prove.

Far o'er the main he quickly hied

From Ella's ardent eye;

Nor heard her miserable moan,

Nor sympathetic sigh.

The maid, possess'd of every charm,

Could now no more inspire;

Her eyes, more brilliant than the day,

Now kindled not desire.

To lawless lust an injur'd prey,
 Poor Ella smil'd no more :
 For woes like her's—in solitude
 She vainly fought a cure.

With faltering step, and wild despair,
 The rocky clift she trac'd ;
 Now musing mournful was her step——
 Now she would flee with haste.

One stormy night a luckless slip
 Immerg'd her in the main :——
 Adieu, thou wretched maid !——thy wound
 Shall never bleed again !

The surrounding multitude had scarcely sympathized with the object which the ballad-singer had so plaintively and so pathetically represented to them, when their attention was caught by a grotesque figure of a woman, in whimsical attire, which, strange to tell, was beautiful to every eye. She wore a bonnet of the glutton's gaudy skin: her robe, of various hue, was hung around with bells, to catch the
 adm-

admiration of the mob, which, once acquired, she would preserve by arts exclusively her own. Her followers she deprived of sight, that, to them, beauty and ugliness, order and confusion, might be one. At will she changed her aspect, like the watery god, to captivate the indifferent eye. Those who refused obedience to her laws, she terrified with croak, more fatal than the Syren's song, and impressed them to her service. Those who from delusion joined her train, remain her slaves for ever. This figure called herself the Genius of Fashion. She was the offspring of Indolence and Wealth; the sister of Folly, the mother of Ignorance and Vice, who from the radiance of her favours outshone the learned and the good.

In

In her train you might have seen a strange concatenation of discordant passions, all honoured, through her influence, as models of perfection.—Pride and Humility, Extravagance and Parsimony, exchanged appearances. Touched by her magic wand, Distinction was forgotten :—none was too base—nothing too ignoble for her patronage. To discriminate between Vice and Virtue, was a task too mean. She promoted Ignorance and Villainy to important offices, and classed under her fascinating banner, they obtained the support and veneration of all mankind.

They now looked towards a grave Quack of formal phiz, and a buffoon who attended him. He had travelled the four quarters of the globe, and called science from every plant that grew—from the bark of Peru to the humble

humble mallows. He had nostrums of all efficacies, and his cures applied in an extraordinary manner to the maladies of the mind. He had pills for the spleen—powders for hypocrisy, pride, and discontent—cathartics to propel envy and ambition—and salves to plaster disappointment. While he was puffing their various and respective virtues, the clock sounded a late hour; and Maria, whose attention had been deeply engaged, turning to remark the grotesque figure that had attracted her, was surprized not to find the rest of her party at her elbow. She looked earnestly on the surrounding multitude——traversed the room with hasty steps—and sought in vain the objects whom she pursued.——She grew perplexed. ——A mask in character accosted her; and addressing her by name, though evidently in a feigned voice, acquainted her that one of
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the ladies, whom she was in search of, had been suddenly taken ill, and that the rest of the party had attended her home.

She thanked him for the information; and requesting him to enquire if Sir Richard Cleveland's carriage was in waiting, on his assuring her it was not, suffered herself to be handed into a chair. The necessary directions were given, and she was soon set down. The same mask was in readiness to hand her from the chair, and conducted her through a lighted hall to an elegant apartment.

She had not noticed the entrance, nor the servants who opened the door; but was now convinced the chairman had mistaken the house, and was retiring, when the person who led her in forcibly held her, and drew her towards

wards a sofa. She struggled to disengage herself, and shrieked aloud, but no one came to her assistance. The bony vigor of her oppressor held her in his firm gripe, and her strength was nearly exhausted.—She heard voices near her, and calling loudly for help, sunk lifeless on the couch.

At that critical moment the door opened, and Charles Belville burst in to the room.—What was his surprise, when he saw in the arms of a brutal monster the inanimate and half-violated form of his sister. He flew like lightning to seize the villain, but he escaped at an opposite door, and in an instant was in the street.—He enquired of the servants—Who had gone out?—but could get no intelligence: no one knew who it was—whether

ther he was gone—or how he came;—
and he fled with impunity.

Belville now returned to his sister, and found her attended by two or three females, who had been endeavouring to recover her for some time, to no purpose. At length she opened her eyes, and sat up. She soon knew her brother; and when her strength was somewhat returned, he took her by the hand, and intimating to her that the house and company she was in were ill-adapted to women of honour and delicacy, led her to a coach which was waiting, and drove with her to Sir Richard Cleveland's.

The family were just returned, and in great confusion at not finding Maria at home. They concluded, as her brother also was missing from the party,

ty, that he had conducted her home, on account of some slight indisposition; but when neither of them were found in Grosvenor Square, and there was no positive testimony that they were gone together, every one became uneasy, and the carriage was sent back, with strict orders to the servants to search every room, and not to return without her.

As the carriage was driving from the door, Maria entered, leaning on her brother, and sunk down upon the nearest seat.

A general consternation seized them; while Belville related, as accurately as he had been able to collect, the untoward circumstances.

While they blamed her incautiousness, they suspected not the villain who

who had deceived her. Maria only had her suspicions; and dreading, if they were known, what fatal consequences might ensue, she determined to confine them to her own breast.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

CONVERSATION---VIEWS OF THE GLACIERS---
A DISPUTE---PROSPECT OF THE ALPS---A
DISCOVERY.

“ Love pursued his steps wherever he went, and left him no place of refuge.”

Zimmerman.

AFTER a short stay at Leghorn, our travellers proceeded along the coast to Lucca, admiring the industry of the inhabitants of that republic, who had given the face of their country so fertile and beautiful an appearance.

As they passed through the less cultivated parts of Genoa, where negligence

gence seemed to be interwoven with the soil—"How different," says Stanley, "is the face of nature!—not only in parts remotely distant from each other, but even within the compass of a few short leagues."

"Or rather," replied Wentworth, "has not Nature been more equal in the distribution of her favours, and left to the ingenuity and industry of man the power of making that difference in her appearance, from the wonderful effects of art and labour?"

"It may be so," replied Stanley; "but it should seem from the fertility of some countries, where industry is almost entirely neglected, (as in Spain, for instance, and in some parts of this country) as if she had kindly provided against the indolence and inactivity of the natives, and were determined to shower

shower down her gifts in spite of the most wilful neglect."

"You seem, in this case," said Wentworth, "to imagine that Nature connived at the laziness which pervades a particular race of men, and designed them to exist in idleness."

"Not so," replied Stanley, "neither;—my argument aims no farther, than to disprove the universality and sameness of Nature in different countries:—the various qualities in soil—the situation of climate—the state of the incumbent atmosphere—all appear to indicate that Nature, though every where liberal, meant not, however, to dispense her blessings with an equal hand; and that art and labour, though indispensably necessary in a certain degree to bring the fruits of every country to perfection, yet are not

not in themselves sufficient to surmount the inconvenience of natural obstacles, but must often yield to disappointment."

Their conversation was interrupted by entering a pleasant village, situated on a branch of the Po. They recollected they were now treading classic ground, and united in lamenting thy early fate, unhappy Phaëton!

Having passed the greatest part of the winter in the beautiful city of Turin, from whence they occasionally made excursions into the rich and fertile provinces of Milan, (as the spring was advanced) they began their route towards the barren and mountainous parts of Savoy.

The sublime and awful prospects which continually presented them-

selves to the eye, as they traversed the plain of Chamouny, forcibly affected the minds of Wentworth and Stanley. The lofty tops of the Glaciers, covered with eternal snows, and separated by fruitful valleys and rich corn-fields—the highest degree of vegetation blended with unconquerable sterility—convey a degree of wonder into the soul, and afford a singular and striking variety.

They gazed at them with almost silent astonishment. Indeed, the situation of Stanley's mind (whose passion every day grew stronger and more deplorable) was but little calculated for the admission of social communication.——The image of Maria continually obtruded on his imagination—of Maria, the most lovely and adorable object he had ever seen.——She had arrested his affections from the moment
he

he first beheld her; and she still remained the idol of his heart.—Vain were his endeavours to forget her, and mocked his most spirited exertions.—The assumed fortitude—the adopted apathy—with which he armed himself, soon yielded to her gentle sway—and like the vernal dew before the morning sun, vanished at her approaching excellence.

He had entered with freedom, and even with avidity, into amusements which he did not relish, at the instigation of Wentworth, who perceived his chagrin, and endeavoured, by the most friendly offices, to dispel it; but his mind was not in the least affected:—it still remained attached to the same object by so firm a cement, that it required a force of much greater power to disunite them. He found nothing in the pursuit of pleasure adequate to

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this.

this. The gay circle and transient splendour may, indeed, cause a ray of light to dart across the gloom, but can produce no settled sunshine:—though, like oil poured upon the ruffled stream, they may calm the surface, yet all below is turbulent and restless.

Such was the agitated breast of Stanley. He had not ceased to think on Maria since he left her peaceful habitation:—she had occupied his thoughts by day—his dreams by night;—yet he had left her without even informing her of his regard. She might, ere his eyes again beheld her, be the property of another:—dreadful reflection! Her, whom he adored beyond every earthly blessing—for whom only he thought life valuable—to be taken from him for ever, and become the exclusive property

perty of another !——Cruel destiny !
 —Yet why should he repine ? Could
 he entertain the least hope that Maria
 would be ever his ? To solicit her af-
 fection, and wed her to a state of po-
 verty, were selfish and ungenerous :—
 it were to gratify his passion at the ex-
 pence of the happiness of its object.
 This was a conduct he disdained ; and
 he had therefore sacrificed his feelings
 to her interest, and torn himself from
 her, to conquer, if possible, the vio-
 lence of an attachment, which, he now
 thought, would end only with his
 life.

Certain it is, his vivacity was gone ;
 and the dull stupor which oppressed
 his mind made him a very careless and
 inobservant traveller. He would of-
 ten ride many hours together without
 making a single remark, or even an-
 swering those of Wentworth, when

called from his reverie, but in the most concise manner, with the monosyllables—*Yes*, or *No*.

Nothing but the natural sprightliness and gaiety of his disposition, mixed with a sincere and long-tryed friendship, could have prevented the most poignant chagrin from arising in the breast of Wentworth, (who had thus generously requested the company of his friend, without suffering him to bear a share in the expence) on seeing this sudden alteration in his whole demeanour. The predominant influence of his mind had usually been cheerfulness; so tempered, however, as never to rise into an unbecoming levity:—his imagination, naturally vivid, and his fancy strong and lively. Thus graced with every endowment and necessary qualification to render him happy in himself, and agreeable to others,

others, Wentworth thought, when he obtained his consent to accompany him, that he had secured in Stanley a capacity to improve, a gaiety to enliven, and an *observation* to increase his own intellectual enjoyments.

But the tone of his former inclination was quite changed, and a certain oppressive weight, of a saturnine and melancholy cast, seemed with leaden sway to have fixed to the earth his *portion of the divine spirit*. Sometimes, indeed, he would start from his benumbing stupor, and, recollecting the injustice he shewed his friend, he would assume an air of tranquillity and cheerfulness; but, even in those serene moments, his gaiety appeared so forced and foreign to his internal sensations, that, even while it amused, it excited the most lively sympathy.

The well-built city of Geneva, which stands on the borders of a lake of the same name, and which they were now entering, roused their attention. The regular fortifications which invest this city, its university and manufactures, attracted their observation:—and having passed some time here in examining every thing worth their notice, they hired a boat, crossed the lake, and landed at Lausanne.

The purple flush of evening, reflected on the clear bosom of the lake—the last beams of the setting sun, which glistened on the distant mountains, whose lofty spires towered into the skies—and, after all, the trembling lustre of the moon's full orb on the expanded surface, formed, in succession, so magnificent and soothing a prospect, that the mind of Stanley

was

was calmed by the general tranquillity which reigned around, and seemed to “soar above this little scene of things.”

Having left Laufanne, they began to ascend, by a winding path, one of those steep and romantic hills with which this country abounds. No sooner had they gained the summit, than there burst, through a magnificent grove of lofty pines, another view of those stupendous hills, the Glaciers, and a continued chain of mountains, whose sides—clothed with the highest marks of cultivation, vineyards and corn-fields, interspersed with cottages—presented to the eye one of the most sublime and picturesque views that the richest imagination can conceive.

They then descended into a beautiful plain, watered by a stream which

rises among the hills, and, after winding its silver course near two miles through the valley, falls into the lake.

As they were descending the path which led into the vale, they saw a group of figures dancing beneath the shade of a thick grove, to the music of a pipe and tabor. It was the conclusion of the harvest, and they were now dissolving in that rural mirth which pervades the country at this season of the year. The chearful looks of the peasants, which testified the plenty of their late vintage—the simple, but apparently transporting pastimes, which they were now enjoying—the contentment which glowed upon their cheeks—seemed to say, that there were pleasures within the compass of the humble cottage, which the richest splendour of magnificence could not outvie.

At

At a small distance from this scene of festivity was another equally worthy of contemplation.—A collection of youth were busily engaged in exhibiting feats of skill in various martial exercises; but particularly in shooting with a cross-bow at an apple stuck upon a pole. It was a ceremony in honour of their noble champion, who bravely freed his country from the wanton cruelty of insulting tyranny, and laid the foundation of the Helvetic union.

Fribourg next received them, where they delayed a while in examining the noted hermitage, about two leagues distant.

“Is it not amazing,” said Wentworth, “that, for so many ages which have transpired since the first dawn of Christianity, and that have produced so

many men whose sentiments were liberal and refined, they should imagine themselves bound by a religion, whose manifest tendency is an active exercise of the social virtues, to drag out a miserable life of penance, apart and secluded from the world, with no companion but a few images of the Blessed Virgin and her Son, and no converse but (as they term it) with the Holy Spirit?"

"It is the prejudice of education," answered Stanley; "an obstacle which can never be compleatly surmounted. Whatever be the natural inclination of a slender twig, we can bend it when it is as yet supple, and teach it to shoot into almost every shape. And indeed I never see those little cells of superstition, but they recal to my mind that excellent maxim of the
poet

poet who was so well acquainted with men and manners—

*“ Quo semel est imbuta recens, servabit odorem
Testa diu.”*

“ And yet,” replied Wentworth, “ when a custom directly militates against the enjoyment of those blessings which the Creator can have so bountifully bestowed, with no other motive than to be tasted with moderation and temperance, I cannot possibly imagine how they should prefer such extreme abstinence and mortification. Those, in my opinion, rank higher in the scale of virtue who are beset and surrounded with temptations; but, as so many wise heroes, refuse to drink deeply of the magic cup of Circé with resolution and perseverance.”

“ You

"You should consider," rejoined Stanley, "that it may appear to *them* a greater virtue to abstain entirely from pleasures, than trust to their prudence to withstand them when present to the view; and perhaps they find, that, with a few exceptions, it tends to the general promotion of goodness. I allow that you can produce one instance where the national prejudices of education have, in a great measure, been overcome—and *that* was, when the religion, which you think they have so grossly abused in the present case, began to extend its genial influence. In a moment all the flattering expectations that the people of Judea had formed of a temporal sovereign, cloathed with majesty and honour, were frustrated on their embracing the christian religion; but, on the other hand, nothing short of such evident testimonies of divine authority

city could have been found to effect their conversion."

They now passed on through the several cantons of this delightful country; and though the variety of prospects could not be said entirely to dispel the gloom that brooded over the mind of Stanley, yet an enlivening ray would sometimes shoot across it, and transform him for a while into the pleasant companion: but, after a short interval of cheerfulness, his "melancholy musing" would recur with threefold vehemence.

Thus (while Lord Fermor's passion, that flashed as it were strongly for a time, was almost stifled by his late stay in Ireland, till fresh fuel had been added to the flame by a second interview, and Stanley's, on the contrary, appeared to gain strength the farther it

it receded from its object) was exemplified that excellent observation of the Duke of Rochefoucault——“ Absence destroys small passions, and increases great ones ; as the wind extinguishes tapers, and kindles fires.”

As they scaled those great and majestic boundaries the Alps, they experienced all the refined sublimity of pleasure ; but it was mixed with an awful dread and terror of that Providence which guards with the eye of vigilance the simple inhabitants, and leads them with a kindly hand through the stupendous wonders—that directs the rude natives how to tread, where an erring footstep must inevitably destroy.

It seemed as if Nature had collected her choicest and most beautiful materials to give effect to such magni-

magnificent scenery. On this side they beheld a stately cascade, that burst from its barren and neglected height, roaring, dashing, foaming :—deep is the sound of its violence, as it strikes the bold projection of the rocks, jutting out their dark, brown sides at its base in thick and manifold confusion :—thence it rolls in a rapid torrent, as it were hastening to a place of rest, till, once more meeting with rugged steeps and craggy precipices, it scatters wildly its grey foam to the wind, in many a whirl convulsive ;—at length it seeks the security of the peaceful vale—at first expanding hoarse, its murmurs soften by degrees, and in distant sounds expire—while the broad and crystal sheet reflects its mount of horrors, and the waters that yet remain to be tost. So still—so silent now—as a giant returned from the war looks back on the foughten field,
and

and the heroes he left behind him, to mix in the din of battle.—On that side, towering eminences, tufted with fragrant shrubs, always inviting to the view, and often grateful to the taste;—fields in high cultivation, or vineyards rich and fruitful, deceived what would otherwise have appeared as a tedious journey. Here were seen in the hollow clefts of rocks, that to them appeared inaccessible, some little towns, like nests in a ruinous trunk;—and there, a rapid river bent its winding course; one while flowing in a widened stream, at another narrowing, fretful, over the pebbled asperity of its bottom.

Such was the varied beauty of those mountains, whose summits reflected the lucid surface of their snows, at intervals, to the sun's bright beams—while storms roll round their sides,
and

and hover below the dazzling tops, forming a sable zone to their white investiture. They could sometimes discern the fearless mountaineers crossing the rivers on a wide-spreading arch, as a misty cloud crept below the fabric; or could just ken some distant objects climbing among the niches of the rocks, while their loose drapery streamed to the boisterous breeze.

As they were thus wandering along the sweetest walks of nature, alternately expressing their surprize at every succeeding scene, they perceived the dulcet sounds of music, and, as it should seem, by mutual consent turned round to examine whence the harmony proceeded.—They discovered a figure at the bottom of a fertile knob, who was seated near the mouth of a cave, that re-echoed to his pipe. His crook lay beside him, and his flock
were

were gathered around ; some of whom, as if charmed with the powers of his melody, were chasing each other in sportive gambols ; while others, that had strayed farther from his tending care, were gazing on our travellers, as they passed the border of their rich pasturage.

There was something in his air and mien that particularly engaged the attention of the two friends.—A brown covering, folded carelessly over his body, while his garments were fastened by a leathern girdle ; but beneath this rude disguise, there was a dignity in his countenance, and his black eyebrows bespoke a mind superior to common intelligence.

As Stanley and his friend approached towards him he rose from his seat, and advanced a few paces, bowing respectfully :

spectfully :——“ Strangers,” said he, “ for such I perceive ye are, and by your dress should imagine you English ;—my cell, I thank heaven, is always open to pilgrims oppressed by hunger or fatigue.”

The manner of his address breathed the true spirit of generosity ; and the surprize of our travellers was further awakened by a deep sigh, that he heaved as he pronounced the word “ English.”——He pointed at his cell, as he spoke, to which he now begged leave to direct them. A vine had been taught to curl its tendrils round the cavity ; and within was a neat bench, that was placed by a table fixed in the earth—an half-broken pitcher, with some necessary utensils, were laid on a small shelf ; and they remarked upon the table “ Locke on the Human Understanding,” with several philosophical

phical publications, whose bindings were much worn, and the leaves soiled.

This was all the furniture of the hospitable recluse.—As soon as they were seated he reached down a basket, from a hole that he had formed on the side of his habitation, filled with the choicest fruits,

“And on the board
Heaps with unsparing hand.”

While they were regaling themselves he eyed Stanley with looks of most earnest attention; and after they had finished their repast, he placed before them some delicious wine, which he informed them was the produce of his own vintage. They were now refreshed, and the discourse turned on various subjects, in which he displayed
much

much good sense, and more than a superficial knowledge of the world.

Stanley was, in a great measure, diverted from his meditative stupor; and Wentworth declared his surprize and happiness at unexpectedly meeting with a person who was a compleat master of the English language.

“Ah! my dear sir,” answered the host, tenderly grasping his hand, “many happy summers have these eyes beheld in your native country.”

“Indeed!”—exclaimed the two friends, almost at the same instant, while they gazed at him in such a manner, as evidently shewed, that nothing but respect, and a fear of intrusion, prevented their demanding a recital of his adventures.

“Yes,

"Yes, gentlemen," replied the shepherd; "and since I have raised your curiosity," added he, politely, "it is but just that I should satisfy it, by a relation of my history."

"Sir," said Stanley, "we esteem ourselves highly indebted for a favour that I had almost been prompted to ask; and I cannot now suppress my admiration, that a person endued with *your* abilities should chuse to reside in so retired a situation."

"You honour me much," rejoined he, with a graceful inflection of his body; "but I must decline performing my promise till the morrow, for we perceive but "one bright curve" of yonder orb that animates the earth, and is now sinking behind the opposite mountain, while a rising mist obscures the valley. You shall not de-
part

part to-night. I flatter myself I can afford you a comfortable lodging.

They had scarcely thanked him for his civil and obliging offer, ere he proposed a little ramble from the cell, to observe the gradual increase of the evening shade.

On their return, our travellers lent him their assistance to secure his little flock in their "wattled pen." He then led them into an apartment, by a door that they had not yet noticed (expecting the next morning with anxious impatience) where they passed no unpleasant night, as they reclined on some downy sheep skins, that he had previously spread for their accommodation.

CHAP. XIII.

EPISODE OF A POLISH NOBLE.

“ Quæque ipse miserrima vidi,
Et quorum pars magna fui.”

Virgil.

“ **I** AM descended from a branch of the noble family of the Sobiefkis, and my name is Sigismund.

“ It is well known that, about a century ago, the kingdom of Poland was torn by internal distractions, upon the death of our royal ancestor.—His descendants experienced innumerable troubles, and were for a long time extremely unpopular. The disturbances appeared, however, to subside

side before the year 1766, when the protestant nobility, and others of the Greek church—"demanded to be reinstated in their ancient rights and privileges," and to be employed in the service of the state, as well as those subjects who professed the Roman Catholic religion; declaring, that a difference in faith and spiritual tenets could not be supposed to divert them from an allegiance to their sovereign, and a regard for the common safety. Whatever might have been the justice of their pretensions, certain it is, that the popish clergy determined to oppose the petition. As this served but to irritate the dissidents, dreadful devastation was the consequence. Many of the principal families were forced to abandon the kingdom; and the hardships that my father sustained, at his estate near Elbing, young as I was, will never be effaced from my

memory :—and scarcely had he endeavoured to retrieve his shattered circumstances—scarcely had he recovered from the perturbation that his losses must necessarily have produced, (as the waves of the ocean require some time to calm, after they have been agitated by the tempest) ere that most execrable of events took place—the dismemberment of my native country.

“ Unhappy Poland !——I look back with horror on thy scenes of distress, that I was so unfortunate as to witness!

“ Gentlemen, you may easily conceive, that, in the bloom and vigor of life, I could not but feel—most *sensibly* feel—the tyrannous and oppressive cruelty of Prussia's king. To behold an aged parent struggling with misfortunes, when his years, alas ! should have

have been the years of tranquillity—it were enough to have roused the heart of a coward!—Warm with resentment, I obstinately bade defiance to the utmost despite of the powers that had conspired to ruin us; and persisted in persuading my relations to refuse signing a treaty that was purposely drawn up to cede the provinces to their respective claimants, to which his majesty and many of the noblesse had agreed, either through compulsion or pusillanimity.

“ This did not long remain a secret to the watchful ears of the Prussian court; that, conscious of its gross injustice, was ever suspicious of the nobles, who were known to be disaffected to its measures. I railed at the spoil that they had made of our properties, and that mansion, which I afterwards

L 3

learnt

learnt was barbarously razed to the ground.

“ One evening,—[my God support me while I relate it!]—one evening, as we were enjoying the cool breezes that succeeded to a warm summer’s day, in an open apartment of the house, facing some grounds that had yet been preserved from their inhuman ravages, a party of armed ruffians (at the instigation, no doubt, of our enemies) rushed insolently upon us. My father, as a roused veteran, resumed his former courage; and, collecting his valour that had lain dormant for a time, but was not yet annihilated, drew his sword, and resolutely withstood their assault: but he soon fell, overpowered by numbers. I started from my seat, half frantic, and, wild in despair, determined to repay their violence.

“ At

" At that instant my wife flew between us, and, falling on her knees, besought her Sigismund, for the love he bore his Augusta, to desist from the affray, and seek a speedy safety by flight; at the same time holding up her infant son before my eyes. Hurt by her untimely interference, I thrust her from me, making my way to the assailants, and, by slaying the two foremost, dismayed the rest of the party, who fled with precipitation.

" But imagine my distress, on turning round, to behold my angel bathed in her blood, from a mortal stab that had pierced her lovely bosom, which was exposed to the fury of a wretch that knew no principle of generous valour; and at the same time had wounded the child that she guarded with her encircling arms. I had myself received a slight scratch in the

skirmish, and had besides exhausted my strength; but I advanced to her as well as I could, leaning on my sword. I perceived that the infant had expired, but I thought I could discover remaining life in its hapless parent.—I called her by her name:—at the well-known sound she opened those beauteous eyes that were languid in death, but closed them again—forever!

“ Yet why should I awaken your pity?—why should I call forth sighs and tears at scenes of such complicated misery?—I will not paint to you the horrors of my situation—but I call that heaven to witness, that I now look up to with a mind calm and untuffed, how sincerely I forgive the horrid instigators.

“ Suffice

" Suffice it to say, that as my father was dead, I succeeded to the title of Count Sobieski.

" I knew the authors of my recent calamities, and I resolved to revenge them.—" Yes !" I cried, " imperial Frideland, thou shalt answer with thy life the wrongs thou hast done me !"

" Wild with rage and phrenzy, I sought the mansion of this nobleman. —It lay adjoining to my own; and its base possessor, who was the cursed agent of a more powerful tyrant, and had been promised (in the general wreck of his country) a large portion of my estates, was seduced to act in concert with plunderers and assassins, and promote the foulest act that in modern times has disgraced the politics of Europe.

“But he escaped not the reward of his perfidy.—It was not long before I found him alone, and in a place suited to my wishes. He was reclined upon a seat in his lawn, at the entrance of a wood, meditating the remainder of his diabolical schemes. He held in his hand a roll of parchment, on which were written the names of those devoted nobles who were to fall by his detested machinations. He had heard of the wound I received in the late attack upon my life, and he believed it mortal. I heard him exulting in the supposed success of his execrable measures—he could not suppress the triumph of his soul.—“Sobieski, the most powerful of my opponents, is removed,” said he:—“it is well.”—I could stay to hear no more—I burst furiously from the place of my concealment.—“Sobieski,” cried I, in a tone of voice which seemed to harrow

harrow up his soul, at the same time that it benumbed his every faculty—
 “lives to punish thy baseness and treachery, thou perfidious traitor!”—
 I drew my sword from my scabbard, and bade him do the same. I had almost bereft him of the power—yet he drew as it were mechanically; and after two or three lunges on each side, which he made but with a faint resistance, I pierced him to the heart.—
 The monster fell ugly in death.

“It was no time for delay.—The scene, which had been observed from a window in his house, brought two of his servants to the spot, at the moment I was obliged to seek my safety in flight. They were too much busied in attending on their lord, who lay weltering in his blood, to think of pursuing me: but I knew that vengeance would not be long delayed.—I

flew with the winged speed of lightning to one of my fleetest horses, which I had tied to a tree at no great distance. I hastened to my house, and taking all the money I could collect in my confusion, I quitted my country immediately for France;—whence, from the activity of my pursuers, I was obliged soon after to escape to England.

“ But to leave my native country thus mangled and torn by various factions, gave me not much uneasiness. It would have been loathsome to remain in it. Ruined in my happiness, and blasted in my hopes—my friends sacrificed—my property and myself marked out as devoted victims—I had no gleam of comfort to attach me to my native soil. I had seen, in one day, the venerable form of an aged father sink into the grave, by the ruf-

fian

fian hand of violence!—I had seen a beloved wife, the tender partner of my joys and sorrows, torn from my fond embrace to an untimely tomb, to be the cold companion of the solitary worm!—I had seen a lovely babe, who should have lived to “bless my doating eyes,” and been the support and comfort of my declining years, snatched from the tender caresses of a father to an early and unseasonable grave, by the relentless hand of death!

“From the moment I arrived in England, I renounced my wretched country, and absolutely became a Briton.

“Fixing my residence at Denbigh, in Wales, I determined to wait till fortune should turn in my favour.—Secure and concealed in this retired part of the country, I endeavoured to
amuse

amuse myself in literary pursuits, and innocent recreations—reflecting on the follies of the jarring world—the unhappiness of court intrigue—and the transient pleasures of the *beau-monde*.

“ My lodgings, though small, were comfortable and convenient; and, as the summer was advancing, I used constantly to walk out towards the close of the day, after having finished my studies, soothing by degrees the remembrance of my misfortunes.

“ In one of my evening rambles I met a young woman, who was endeavouring to screen her little spaniel from the insults of a mastiff belonging to a countryman, who was passing by totally unconcerned at the lady's embarrassment. I droye away the dog with my stick, and extricated her favourite; reprimanding the rustic for
his

his stupid want of feeling.——[She was the daughter of a neighbouring gentleman, who had a small estate in the county. I had often seen her enjoying the cool of the evenings; and, from frequently meeting her, I had never omitted, as I passed, to make my obeisance.]——She thanked me in a most engaging manner, and we immediately became acquainted.

“ For the future I was the companion of her walks; and, from sometimes attending her home, I was introduced to the family. I experienced great pleasure in their acquaintance; and whether she observed that I paid her particular attention, or had been pleased with my address when we were strangers, certain it is, I soon discovered that I was by no means indifferent to her. The affection was mutual. In a short time I prevailed on
her

her to change her maiden name, Campbell, to that of Stanley, which I had assumed on my arrival in England."

Stanley and Wentworth gazed at each other and the speaker alternately, during the last sentence; nor sooner had he finished the period, than, starting up, they enquired if his wife was related to the Clevelands, at that time resident in Wales?

"Yes," replied the count, hastily; "she was the sister of Lady Cleveland."

"Proceed, Sir, I beseech you," replied Stanley, starting wildly with amazement; "my throbbing breast forebodes a discovery that nearly concerns us both."

"As

“As we had but a scanty income, and I did not at all relish an idle life, owing to the natural activity of my youth, Sir Richard politely offered me his interest to procure a commission in the army. At that time appearances were very hostile between the mother country and her colonies in America; and an officer in a regiment, that was stationed near Boston, wishing to quit the service, I was fortunate enough to supply the vacancy.

“We had been married but a few months, which served to embitter the separation. However, I was not long in providing for my departure. To omit the particulars of my voyage and disembarkation—I need not inform you, that the officers at the engagement of Bunker’s Hill were marked for slaughter by the enemy. I was among the number of the wounded,
and

and for a long time they believed me in danger.

“Receiving no letters from Mrs. Stanley, I imagined that the English newspapers must have declared my wounds mortal; and was on the point of writing, by an opportunity which soon after presented itself; when, to add to my distress, I found, from a letter that a correspondent wrote me from London, that he had heard my wife had paid the debt of nature, at the village of H....., to which she was removed; and that since our parting she had lived retired from the world, and even from her own relations, who, he believed, had been rather inclined to think her below their familiarity, from our narrow circumstances.”

Stanley

Stanley changed colour, and—
 “ Good God !” he exclaimed,—“ do
 I now behold a father ?”

“ You do, indeed,” replied the
 count. “ I saw the features of that
 lovely woman the moment I beheld
 you, though I knew not, when I left
 England, that my wife was preg-
 nant.”

Bursting into tears, they tenderly
 embraced each other ; and Wentworth
 could not suppress the sympathetic
 sigh at so affecting an interview.

The old count then fell on his
 knees, and holding up his hands to
 heaven—“ I thank my God,” he
 cried, “ that he has yet some blessings
 in reserve, to crown the latter days of
 his unworthy servant.”

Stanley

Stanley, at length recovering from the first transports of his joy, desired his father to continue the history of his adventures ; as he felt his anxiety more than ever increased, to learn how he could have fixed on such an habitation, and change his regimentals for the sorry garb of an humble shepherd.

“ As soon as I had received the information of your mother’s death,” continued the Count Sobieski, “ I broke out into exclamations, against Providence, that were little short of blasphemous impiety. I demanded of Fortune, if she ever intended to look on me with a favourable eye ; and upbraided her with softening her countenance into a faithless, temporary smile, that the frown which succeeded might appear more terrible.

“ It

“ It would have been a distant voyage to England, where I knew but a few people, and with those was hardly acquainted; and as I had long ago disowned all thoughts of returning to my native Poland, where the disturbances still continued with unabated rigour, I determined to remain in the service, as the society of the mess, and even the fatigues of war, served to divert my mind from a retrospection of former follies and distresses.—

The army was reduced to great extremities while at Boston, which place they soon after left for Halifax in Nova Scotia. In short, I staid in America till the war was nearly ended; but happening to dispute with one of the mess, who was rather intoxicated, he made use of such opprobrious terms, as, according to the modern law of honour, could not be connived at with impunity. We had been conversing
on

on the unhappy fate of the brave and worthy Major Andr  e, who had just suffered his well-known punishment. — As I had always esteemed and revered his character, I was hurt at some illiberal expressions that were maliciously thrown out against him by my opponent, and retorted, perhaps, too hastily. But I was the more affected at finding that such was not only his language when heated with liquor, as he refused the next morning to apologize for his behaviour. However, I attributed his obstinacy to an unconquerable spirit, and my own breast was a candidate in his behalf. I wished not (if it were possible to avoid it) to embrue my hands in the blood of another antagonist. I remembered how many had already fallen victims to a resentment, that, though just, had yet awakened my keenest sensibility, and

had left behind it a degree of remorse.

“ But observing myself slighted, and treated with a marked contempt by the rest of the mess, I took the first opportunity to leave the army, (notwithstanding I had been promoted during the war) more than ever disgusted with the world, that had now so much destroyed my natural inclinations and former affection for social life, as almost to convert me into a misanthrope.

“ I was now at that period of life, when the mind seeks to confirm herself by an experience that she has long been at pains to collect; and, rejoicing in her own elasticity, finds in herself a fund of entertainment, abstracted from external pleasures; while the vanity and emptiness of temporal objects

jects become every day more manifest; and in proportion as they evaporate, and raise the scale of *gaiety* in Nature's once almost equal balance, sinks down with increasing weight the enjoyments which proceed from more *solid reflections*.

" I now found that Religion was the common haven for every wavering thought—the sovereign antidote that poured its softening essence into my wounded soul.

" In this happy temper of mind, when my breast proved a peaceful tranquillity, to which it had hitherto been a stranger, I resolved on retiring to the mountains of Switzerland, where the awful sublimity of every surrounding scene would inspire ideas agreeable to my wishes.

" That

“ That I might not be totally unemployed, I brought with me some favourite authors for occasional perusal. I had secured some jewels on my retreat from Poland, which, at the same time that they were no incumbrance, could be converted into specie on any emergency. I purchased a few sheep; and, the better to conceal myself from the prying eye of impertinent curiosity, I exchanged my cloaths with a peasant, who, as he hoped to reap advantage by the sale, was in his turn equally benefited.”

As soon as the count had finished the recital of his adventures, Stanley and Wentworth united with him in descanting on the goodness of that Providence, which, though it veils its mysteries in a cloud impervious to the ray of mortal sight, has yet some

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great design in view, which it pursues by regular and uniform advances. They thanked him for his indulgence with a respect that, though it before was great, was now much increased.

After a happy meal, whose luxury was heightened by their recent good fortune, they all agreed to depart for England by the first conveyance; and Wentworth willingly dispensed with a farther journey into Italy, as they should sooner prove the pleasure of introducing the count to the Vicar, as well as to the Clevelands. The sheep were disposed of in the course of a week, and Sobieski prepared for the approaching journey.

It was with reluctance, however, that he left his beloved habitation.—

“Adieu,” said he, “thou silent cell!
—sacred

—sacred to peace and retirement—
 thou must at last be robbed of thine
 old tenant; but he is torn from thee
 by those objects, who, by natural
 right, demand a prior affection.—
 Often have I decked thy simple table
 with the choicest and most delicious
 fruits:—often hast thou entertained
 the mountaineer, (rude child of na-
 ture) fatigued and weary with his wan-
 derings, thou poor, but hospitable
 seat!—often hast thou echoed to the
 bleatings of my tender flock, or list-
 ened as I tuned my pipe to its soft and
 mellow murmurs!—But now must I
 bid thee farewell!—Ever shall thine
 image be before mine eyes;—and
 those happy hours that glided unseen
 beneath thy humble roof, shall sooth,
 by a remembrance of their heart-felt,
 calm delights, the storms that may
 yet lower and obscure, by their par-
 tial gloom, the evening of my life.”

When he had nearly lost sight of its eminence, he turned round, and was prompted to have again addressed it; —but, choaked with the remembrance, he would not indulge a weakness that he thought might be uninteresting to his fellow-travellers, and darted a last look in silent haste, as if afraid of beholding it too long. For a moment he hid his face in his handkerchief, to conceal a tear which stole down his aged cheek.

On their arrival at Venice he parted with his dress for one more suited to his rank; when the two friends had, for the first time, an opportunity of beholding his person. Dignified in its appearance, his figure, almost six feet in height, was marked with the most excellent symmetry; while a dark complexion, that was ringed with a kind

kind of olive, gave him, on the whole, the air of a noble veteran.

They could not avoid loitering a while to admire the singular construction of this city, and the number of bridges crossing the several canals.

The Venetians were now observing the annual ceremony of a marriage between their Doge and the Adriatic, which is performed by the former dropping a ring into the water.

As they beheld the state barge, attended by others belonging to the nobility, who appeared in their proper dresses, it seemed to remind them of that magnificence which they had often seen exhibited on the Thames by the city of London, at the shew of its chief magistrate.

Nothing

Nothing material occurred, however, as they crossed the dutchy of Mantua, excepting that they amused themselves, at intervals, with repeating some favorite passages out of Virgil's Eclogues ;—inspired, as it should seem, by treading in the footsteps of that ancient and beautiful writer.

The count, ere long, perceived the weight that oppressed the mind of his son, and took occasion of mentioning it to Wentworth, who informed him that he was endeavouring to divest himself of an attachment for the daughter of the gentleman who had conducted himself towards him as a second father ; for Stanley had already signified to him how much he was indebted to the friendship of Mr. Belville.

Soon

Soon after, our travellers, returning to Leghorn, heard of a vessel that was on the point of sailing; and, rejoiced at the news, they were not long in providing for a passage to their native and much wished for Albion.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

No. 15, Old Bond-street.

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THE Encouragement which HOOKHAM has met with in his Plan of establishing a LITERARY ASSEMBLY, has induced him to make the utmost Exertions in his Power during the Recess, in order to render the Institution as complete as possible. He has now the Pleasure to announce to the Nobility and Gentry, that the Rooms have undergone great Alterations and Improvements, and that every Convenience has been resorted to for their Accommodation, which he hopes will meet with their Approbation and Encouragement.

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January, 1796.

